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OUR TWO LIVES;

OR,

GRAHAM AND I

BY

A. H. K.

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OUR TWO LIVES.

CHAPTER I.

HERE it is; three o'clock in the afternoon, and I have but just now remembered that this is the anniversary of my marriage-day! It seems heathenish not to have thought of it before; but my hands have been fully occupied, and there are days when a housekeeper has little time for sentiment. Now I have remembered it, thoughts and feelings crowd thick and fast on brain and heart. How long back in the past my marriage seems! Yet it was only five years ago to-night.

How vividly it all rises before me—that dear old parlor, where I stood under grandfather's picture; the wreath of white roses

round it; the throng of faces, felt, rather than seen; the voice of the aged pastor, whom I loved like a father, and whose benediction still lingers in my ear—these, and the thrilling sense of unseen witnesses, all come back to me now.

Was it a mere fancy that my dear father, who would have been so deeply moved at giving his only child into the keeping of another, was near me then, though the green turf had been lying many a year on his beloved face? Was he not really there, knowing and sympathizing in my joy? Could all this be taking place in my life, and he feel no interest—he who had always watched over me with such intense anxiety?

It is, of course, impossible to answer such a question; but I know that the consciousness I had of his presence, if only a pleasing fancy, gave an added sacredness and joy to the occasion.

After my engagement to Graham, I had been tortured by doubts and misgivings—not of him, but of myself. I knew I loved

nim truly and tenderly; but I was in all things so much his inferior, bringing him no dower of wealth, or grace, or beauty. Could I hope to make him happy, and should I ever become what he had a right to expect his wife to be?

I was nothing but a poor little school-teacher, and he was the only son of the oldest family in the county, having intellect, education, and family connections to boast of—not wealth, though—I do not think I could have married him if, in addition to all the rest, he had been wealthy;—but, by some accident, that had been lost, and he had only his profession, with a small pittance added, to begin with. But the Kingston family pride was proverbial; and I was the least of all nobodies, so far as family was concerned.

But, on the eve of my marriage-day, these doubts fled away, and a great peace came into my soul. Not that I felt any more worthy; but I placed myself and my future, by a new consecration, in God's hands;

giving body and soul, the present and the future, into His holy keeping, with a new sense of his fatherly love and care.

I think I may say, and I would say it reverently, that my Heavenly Father's marriage gift to me was Faith; a sweet, undoubting trust in His nearness and protection. I was all weakness, but He was infinite strength, and His strength was an exhaustless fountain, from which I might always draw; therefore, I need not fear.

It was very blessed thus to rest, as it were, under the shadow of His wing, and to have every wave of doubt and fear hushed into peace upon my marriage morning.

The day was full of bustle and excitement; but, while the surface was stirred by thoughts of veils, bridesmaids, and wedding-guests, deep below lay the unruffled peace; and I took my marriage-vow with the sustaining hope that God's blessing rested on my soul.

Five years ago to-day, and how changed

I am ! The timid, shy girl of twenty-two is now a practical and rather stout matron of twenty-seven, self-relying, full of care, and with little time to sentimentalize ; only that just now, when Graham is away, I have gone back to my old habit of scribbling. It is not so very quiet, though ; for my two-year-old Bessie, "Queen Bess," as we often call her in sport,—our pet and darling,—is scampering about the room, full of mischief and childish prattle.

Graham was right when he said marrying would take the nonsense out of me ; it did, and I have grown healthier in mind and body. How could I help it with such a sensible, patient husband ? Not but that he has plenty of faults, as most mortal husbands have, I take it ; but he is upright and honest to his heart's core ; a manly man, without a particle of meanness or jealousy in him—a man whose faults I can forget, and in spite of them thoroughly honor and respect. I am thankful for this. There are plenty of men whose wives can never re-

spect them ; and, respect being wanting, marriage must be a sad mockery.

“Who live true life can love true love,”

Mrs. Browning says ; and none others, she might have added.

My home is not in the least like my girlish ideal of one ; that was a sunny, cosey little cottage, with vines and verandahs all about it ; this is a square, old-fashioned castle of a house, every room marked off by straight lines, all just of a size, and opening into a broad hall, without a piazza or vine near it ; but we have two magnificent old elms waving over the high gambrel roof, and they are its pride and glory. It certainly is a handsome old house, though not in the least adapted to me ; it should have a stately mistress sweeping through it in silks and satins, doing the honors royally ; while I have no more presence than a midge, and always shrink painfully from strangers.

It was built by old Mr. Kingston, Gra

ham's grandfather, and in his day was filled with high-born guests; afterwards, his father lived here; and two years ago, at his death, Graham decided to come into it, much against my wish. Our first home was a tiny little cottage, brimming over with sunshine; with small parlors, straw matings and chintz-covered furniture; and, more than all, Baby, herself an incarnated sunbeam, had been born in it, and my heart clung to every board and nail. This was grand and gloomy, with old-fashioned wood panelings, dark-wall papers, solid mahogany chairs and sofas covered with funereal hair-cloth, and having a mouldy, unaired smell about everything; just the house, I told Graham, to see witches and hobgoblins in. And to think of bringing Baby into such a place! It was terrible to think of, and a real trial to me. But Graham had set his foot down, and would hear of nothing else; and so, wife-like, I submitted, half crying my eyes out when he was out of sight,—calling it “the old crow's nest,” and

all sorts of horrid names. I took that time to do it; because, if we must come, I did not choose to bring any more gloom into the dingy old place with me.

It was natural enough, I knew, that Graham should want to keep the old family mansion his father had given him; and we were too poor to own two—but it was a sore wrench to leave the dear little “Bird’s-nest,” as we called the cottage; and I cried like a baby when I went into the rooms for the last time, and thought of all we had enjoyed there; not that those three years had been all happiness; but, as a whole, they had been very bright, and no other place could ever have such precious associations as our first married home.

How well I remember the day we moved! As if to enhance the sadness, it was one of the dimmest of May mornings; not raining exactly, but so raw and chilly that, like the little old woman in the nursery rhyme, “we began to shiver and we began to shake,” long before the end of our five

miles' ride. It had been a fearfully busy time; for, as if preparation for the flitting was not enough, Baby began to get a tooth, and wailed day and night, as if her little heart, too, was breaking over the change; so I had not been over to the new (or rather the old) house; and Graham had said he would see that things were all put to rights there. Putting "to rights," after a man's fashion, it would be; and I groaned in spirit at the prospect. We were to take over what little we had in the "Bird's-nest;" but the main part of the house would keep the same old furniture.

Weary and sad enough; and, I fear, rebellious, too, did I feel when I clambered up into the carry-all that day, or rather on to it; for everything that had not gone before was crowded into that till it was a sight to behold—behind and before, under the seat and over it, back of us, front of us, right of us, left of us, over us and under us, were packed, squeezed, jammed and rammed, boxes, baskets, bundles, pails, pitchers,

pots and pans—till the whole looked as if old Chaos had come back again; and on the top of everything I was perched, with Baby in my arms, so covered up with shawls and blankets that nothing but the remotest end of her dear little nose could be seen. How Graham ever got himself in, in addition, remains to me a miracle to this day; but he did, and drove us over.

Not much was said on the way, the rawness creeping into our very bones and chilling our spirits; indeed, I kept my mouth shut, on principle, sure that something hateful would pop out if I opened it. We went slowly, of course, with all that breakable freight on board; so the weather had time to change, and the clouds had lifted, and a watery gleam of sunshine struggled through, as we drove into the broad street of Ashwood; but never was a mortal in a more unamiable frame of mind than I, when having been extricated from the carry-all, I dragged myself up the back door steps.

Baby had been asleep, but woke up just then, and gave a succession of howls as her father carried her in ; exhausted, I dropped into the nearest chair and took her ; the poor little thing was as cold as a frog, and it seemed an age before we could get her milk warmed, during which she screamed without cessation at the top of a very excellent pair of lungs.

“Scream on, poor Baby,” was my mental ejaculation ; “it is fitting you should enter this old dungeon with a wail, for precious little enjoyment will you or your poor mother ever know within its walls !”

This pleasant contemplation was broken in upon by a cheery voice at my elbow, saying,

“Wife, when you are ready, we’ll go over the house, and see what is wanting.”

How like a man, never tired himself or dreaming anybody else can be ! What *my* soul craved, was to sit in that dusty chair in that disordered kitchen the remainder of my natural life ; but Baby having drunk her

milk like a little pig, and gone back to dream-land, had been dumped down on a pile of blankets; so there was no reason why her cross mother should not follow her lord and master on an exploring expedition round the house.

First, we went into the broad hall that ran through the house, paneled with dark wood, with a spacious staircase and broad landings, on one of which a tall, old clock was dismally ticking off the minutes. This would have been called elegant by many, but not by me in that frame of mind; it simply looked cold and cheerless. It was the same with the large, dim parlors; everything was heavy, rich, and unhome-like.

I made few comments, still keeping my mouth shut on principle; but, as Graham talked incessantly, seeming in remarkably fine spirits, no one noticed it.

At length, Graham opened a door with a great bang—he always will bang a door—leading, at the back of the hall, into what

we had fixed on for a sitting-room, it being somewhat less cheerless than the others, though cheerless enough to me.

But what did I behold! Was I dreaming? Had I lost my eyes and got a new pair, or what was it?

An enchanted palace, a fairy grotto, a bower of beauty lay before me. In sober English, a room with sunlight streaming all over it from a new bay-window, with a bright, flower-strewed carpet on the floor; chairs, easy-chairs and lounges, covered with lively-patterned chintz; hanging baskets, from which drooped lovely vines, with pretty pictures, carved brackets, statuettes and vases scattered everywhere about—the very realization of my ideal of a charming sitting-room.

I don't know what I did; something very absurd in the way of hugging my husband, and dancing about the room, I fear; for it all came over me in a flash how hard he had been working to give me this surprise; how long ago he must have planned it, and how

carefully he had consulted my taste in every little detail. I did not think it had been in him to do such a thing, the dear old darling; and I meantime fretting and repining!

I tried to tell him, but he never fully knew—only one could do that—how ashamed of myself I felt; and how fervently I resolved there should always be—God helping me—the sunshine of love and peace in that old house; yes *always*, let whatever of outside gloom might come!

If husbands did but know what an incentive to good behaviour gratitude is! Mine does know; and this, I am sure, is one great secret of what little goodness as a wife I have shown in these five years.

Out of this ideal sitting-room opened a large airy bed-room; on that, too, a fresh wall-paper had been hung, over which pretty bright flower-wreaths ran; just the paper to study if I should ever be obliged to lie in my bed with nothing else to do—I

had tried that, with only blank white walls to cheer me !

If I were a good fairy, one of the very first things I would do would be to put lively pictures or cheery wall-papers on the rooms of invalids ; for what is to keep hosts of such from going frantic by gazing on blank white walls with their poor, longing eyes, which must look somewhere, day in and day out—and alas ! alas ! too often, night in and night out besides—I am sure I don't know.

These lovely rooms made the whole house brighter, and by degrees I managed to get every part of it aired ; as the sun shone in, the ghosts and spiders trooped out, and Baby crows there now, as merrily as she ever did in the cottage ; and her tiny feet go pattering up and down the great hall, as though it had been made for her to romp in, with no fear of the ancestral Kingstons before her eyes, the darling !

So to-day, though my preference would still be for a smaller house ; and I do not

yet feel quite at ease in the company parlors, always managing to get my guests into the sitting-room, if possible—I flatter myself there is a warm, human atmosphere pervading the whole house; and my heart swells with unutterable gratitude when I remember how much I have enjoyed here, and how good God has been to me, to us all, in these two years.

CHAPTER II.

I HAD written that chapter and just laid down my pen, when I saw Miss Patty Train coming up the yard. As soon as she had taken breath, after plumping herself down into a rocking chair, she began to open her budget of calamities, talking in her hoarse, croaking tones, that always reminds me of a tombstone.

“ I ’spose you know, Miss Kingston,” she said, “ there’s scarlet fever down to Beebe’s: Laury and Tom are both down with it, and the doctor says Laury won’t live the night out. She’s jest the same age as your Betsey, born the very day after. I allus remember that, because I was in to Miss Beebe’s that very afternoon; and Sally Morgan, she was there too; and, says she, ‘ Law-

yer Kingston's got a baby born last night, and they are mighty tickled about it.' 'They'd better not feel too crank,' says I; 'taint no ways likely 'twill live long; women like her don't have babies with any constitution. She has lived a spell, you see, but then she's allus been a puny, weakly thing, and she ain't had nothin' yet—no scarlet fever, nor mumps, nor measles, nor whoopin' cough—them's what carries children off,' I tell 'em."

My Bessie puny and weakly! Who ever heard such nonsense? Yet it frightened me to hear of scarlet fever in the neighborhood, the one disease I had stood in mortal terror of ever since Bessie was born.

"It 'ud go hard with Betsey if she was to get the fever," croaked on Miss Patty, in her dismallest tone, "and she's been exposed, for Miss Beebe says she see you and her go into Tim Maloney's t'other night; and Tim's Pat had just that minute gone out of Miss Beebe's kitchen, where Miss Beebe was a settin' with Laury in her lap, trying to warm

her up a little by the kitchen stove, and she was just a breakin' out with the rash,—the very time to give it. 'I'll jest run round and tell her,' says I, 'for, like as not, Miss Kingston hain't heard a breath about it, and ain't a mite worried about Betsey.'"

Yes, I had stepped in at Tim Maloney's that night to see his wife about some washing, and Bessie and Pat had stood close together staring at each other as children will; and he just from the side of Laura Beebe, who was dying of scarlet fever! I could not help feeling a good deal alarmed.

"How was Laura first taken?" I asked.

"Oh, just as they allus be; fust hot and then cold; and all to once she was in a ragin' fever, and her skin as red as any beet you ever see. They didn't send for no doctor, thinkin' at first 'twan't nothin' but a cold; but as soon as he laid his eyes on her, he said she'd die. If I was you, Miss Kingston, I'd clap a mustard poultice onto Betsey's stomach, and get her feet into hot water as quick as ever I could, and then

put her to bed with a dose of seeny ; 'twon't do her no harm, you know—and her face does look proper red, I declare !”

Bessie had just come in, her cheeks all aglow from romping in the garden. I called her to me, examined her pulse, looked at her tongue, felt of her skin, and, alarmed as I was, could find nothing out of the way ; and once more running my eye over her sturdy little figure, broad chest and ruddy cheeks, could not help saying, a little triumphantly :

“ I don't call that a puny child, Miss Train.”

“ Them's just the ones to be took off suddenly,” she said ; “ the fever 'll go harder with her for being so full-blooded. I'd give her a dose of physic anyhow, 'twon't do her no harm, you know.”

I did not agree with Miss Patty there ; a dose of nauseous drugs to disturb and irritate her stomach would be sure to do a well child harm ; but I was weak enough to soak her feet, and give her aconite, because she

happened to cough once or twice, and said, "Yes, mummer," when I asked her if her throat was sore. To be sure she said, "Yes, mummer," with equal alacrity, when I asked if her throat felt well; but Miss Patty's croak had taken effect; the child might have been exposed, her flesh did seem hot, Graham was gone; and what if anything should happen!

My eyes filled with tears when she lisped her "Now I lay me down to sleep," and I kissed her more passionately than ever. Oh, how fervently I prayed that night that God would spare me my sweet lamb!

I had a restless night, constantly watching Bessie's breathing, and, fancying it was too quick, more than once lighting the lamp to see if there had been any change, and wondering if it would not be safer to have the doctor in the morning. Graham would not be home till night, and I always felt so helpless when he was gone.

In the morning, I had partly slept off my alarm, yet not entirely, and I anxiously

watched the child as she played with her tiny cups and saucers.

"Suddenly she said, "Now, I'll *pay*;" and, bowing her curly head, she murmured, "Our Fader who art in Heaven; for Christ's sake, Amen."

At another time, I should not have noticed this; but when she pushed back her playthings and began to sing, rocking back and forth in her little chair,

"Jesus loves me, when I die
He will take me to the 'ty,'

it affected me strangely, and I felt as if Jesus were going to take her to Himself.

"I'll send for the doctor," I said; "that can't do any harm, as Miss Patty says."

But, just then, the door opened, and Graham's dear old homely face looked in; the face that always brings sunshine and strength with it.

"The Court adjourned last night; so you see I am home twelve hours sooner than I

expected. But what's the matter, wife? you look forlorn!"

I felt far less forlorn with his strong arm around me; but I told him about the scarlet fever and my fears. He looked at the child anxiously; a moment, then caught her up in his arms, tossed her up to the ceiling, and shouted:

"You old Mother Bunch, you are the *weldest* child in town, Miss Patty Train to the contrary, notwithstanding."

"I, too, could laugh then, though I watched the child closely for a week or two.

That night, when Baby—we still call her so, the darling—was asleep in her little crib, Graham laid down his newspaper and proposed to read to me, as he often did at evening.

"No," I said, "I'd rather talk to-night about Bessie. It troubles me, Graham, when I see how I cling to that child. If she were to be taken away, I couldn't bear it—it would kill me. I can't say 'Thy will be done,' when I think of it. Life would be so

desolate—I couldn't live without my baby!"—and I sobbed hysterically.

"But, my dear, if the Lord were actually to come for her, don't you suppose he would help you to give her up? He doesn't ask you to give her up *now*. 'Dying grace,' as good old Deacon Booth used to say, 'doesn't come till the dying hour,' and that is as soon as it is needed."

"But I ought to be able to say, 'Thy will be done,' even if He wills to take her from me."

"And can't you, Annie? Don't you feel so certain that He wills only what is best for you and for her, that you can trust him to do as He pleases?"

"But His will might break my heart," I cried, "and I can't want Him to do that!—Can *you* say it?"

I turned and asked the question sharply, for my heart was sore, and his coolness irritated me.

He did not answer at once, but shaded his face with his hand, and thought.

"Yes," he said at length, his voice full of emotion, "Yes, Annie, I think I can. I am so certain He knows so much better than we whether it is best she should grow up to face the trials and temptations of life on earth, or be early carried to lie in His bosom, that I dare not take her future into my hands—dare not say, *my* will be done."

"You don't love her as I do," I said, still excited, and with a spirit of opposition in my heart; "no man ever does; she isn't a part of your very life as she is of mine."

"God only knows how very dear she is to me," he said; "but you are right, Annie, no man can love as a mother does."

"No, indeed!" I said. And I went to the crib and stood gazing a long time at Bessie as she lay across it, her curls all in a moist tangle, and her arms thrown out in those strange, graceful postures sleeping children manage to get into.

"No, no father loves you as I do," I repeated to myself. "But Christ loves her as well," was my next thought. I believed

this with my understanding, but I did not feel it in my heart. Who could love her so dearly; or depend on her, as I did, for companionship and solace, for sunshine and joy, every minute of my life?

She turned over, half-opened her rosy mouth, and cooed, as she has a habit of doing in her sleep—perhaps all babies do—but what do I know of other babies?

It would be hard to convince me that any other ever had such cunning little ways as mine. What was she dreaming of—what seeing in that soft slumber? Angels, seraphs, heaven; who could tell? I bent over and kissed her forehead, eyes, cheek, and lips, and then each soft, dimpled hand, my tears flowing fast meanwhile. Could I ever give her up? The very thought of it was agony.

I sat down by Graham, leaning my head on his shoulder.

“Yes, little mother,” he said, softly, “you love her best, I don’t doubt that; but I sometimes wonder if we have any just idea

of what true love is. Love certainly forgets self, and thinks first of the good of the loved one; you sacrifice yourself perpetually for Baby—never thinking of it as sacrifice, because you love her so. And I believe you would still do so if she were to be taken to heaven—that because you love her the best, you would the soonest rejoice in yourself bearing all the suffering, knowing she was perfectly and forever happy. Yes, I think, you love her even well enough for that, Annie.”

“I ought to,” I said; but I wept still, less bitter tears, though.

“I know I love Bessie a great deal too well,” I murmured. “I have known it ever since she was born, and it worries me.”

“I don’t think so,” said Graham. “I doubt if we can love too well. God is all love, and the more we are like Him the more we shall love; the trouble is not in the quantity but the quality of our love. If it were wholly pure, wholly unselfish, it

couldn't be too deep or intense; for all true loving lifts us to a higher plane, bringing us nearer to God and the eternal goodness."

It was not quite clear to me that he was right.

"We may love an unworthy object," I said, "and that doesn't elevate us. Take, for instance, a wife with a bad husband; she loves him doatingly; and, for that reason, tolerates his vices, and thus lowers her own moral tone, unconsciously coming down nearer to his level every day she lives with him."

"I don't agree with you," said Graham. "If her love is true love, that is, free from selfishness, I think this very love makes her clearer to see and quicker to feel her husband's faults, just in proportion to its strength; and that the more she loves him, the more she will shrink away from his sins with loathing, while loving the sinner tenderly. There is Mary Beebe, with her intemperate husband; she don't love his vices.

but him, in spite of them; and her own soul has been growing constantly whiter in all these years of agony."

"Yes; I own it is so, in her case," I said.

"And how God loves sinners, while infinitely abhorring the sin. You don't suppose that Christ's loving sinners, and mixing with them familiarly, ever degraded Him?"

"What a question, Graham! Of course not; but then we are not like Him."

"No, we are not; and that solves the whole difficulty and brings me back to my starting-point. Pure love, love like Christ's, cannot be too intense. We may make idols of our children, but it is when we cling to them selfishly and for our enjoyment. And the way to remedy it is to love them in the right way, not less."

"It is astonishing how self mixes up with all that is best in us," I said.

"Yes, even a man's love for his wife and children, often the best thing in him, is pretty sure to have some taint of selfishness,

whether he knows it or not. It creeps even into our love for our heavenly Father ; we too often think of the joy and good it will bring to *us*."

We talked a good while, saying how strangely good and evil were mixed together in our hearts, and how disgusted we became with ourselves whenever we dared sift our motives honestly.

"I don't know how those who believe men are born pure, account for all the badness there is in the best of us," said Graham. "I should have believed in a fall if the Bible said nothing about it ; human nature, as it is revealed to us every day of our lives, shows so much that is wrong and unlike its divine original."

"So much that is good and beautiful, too," I said. "Certainly, I have great faith in the perfectibility of human nature, but very little in our being born perfect or untainted."

"Even the baby," I said, "shows a great deal of naughtiness so early, the germs of

what will become real badness unless checked."

"Yes; we have to train, not an angel, but a little being full of goodness and badness curiously mixed together. We must strengthen the one and uproot the other."

Then we talked over our ideas of education and family government; favorite topics since Bessie's birth, both our heads being brimful of delightful theories, most of which, I must say, thus far, Baby has utterly upset. Then followed an evening prayer; the time when our souls are always drawn nearest together—the most precious hour of all the day. I suppose there are husbands and wives who never pray together; but how far apart their souls must dwell, and how little they can know of the purest enjoyment a true marriage gives!

After the good-night kiss to Baby—Graham never fails to go to the crib and kiss the darling birdie the last thing—we went to sleep, at least Graham did; but I had

that question of submission to settle with myself.

It was one of those nights when a body thinks. It humiliated me to see how little of real unselfishness there was in my love even for my child, and how little of true submission in my heart. And yet it seemed to me I did desire to be unselfish and Christ-like; but I was so far, so very far from being it! I wanted my will to be conformed to His, for I knew it was a good and every way perfect will; that is, I wanted it with a part of my being, while a part of me cried out for selfish indulgence, and to have my own desires gratified. It was the old antagonism between good and evil which sometimes asserts itself in very positive forms. The spirit of a child, submission to its father's will, was what I ought to have, but had not. I wanted my own way, especially in regard to my child; and I knew if she were to be taken from me, I should rebel, even against the Almighty. The question, Could I give her up? had now

risen in my heart, and it would not down at my bidding. Was I then a rebellious, instead of a dutiful child; had evil more power over me than good? I prayed long and earnestly to be made better; to be made loving and childlike to the innermost depth of my being, and after many hours of struggle there came a calm; the billows grew quiet, as of old, when the Lord Jesus said, "Peace, be still." A new conception of God's love and goodness stole into my heart; I saw he loved me *tenderly*, even as I loved my child; how then could he harm me? My heart glowed as I thought of it; and I whispered, "Lord, do with us as Thou wilt; I am Thy child, to be led and governed by Thee, and my child is Thine; I will fear no evil, for Thou art with us."

Was I still selfish? I was still thinking of me and mine, but He, who knoweth our frame, I hope permits such consideration for self. In time, if we seek His aid, we may hope to be lifted out of ourselves into a wider place, and

“Change the dream of me and mine
To the truth of Thee and Thine.
Until all things fair and good,
Seem our natural habitude.”

In the morning I told Graham, “I hope I *can* say, ‘Thy-will be done!’”

His face lighted up with that beautiful smile which always comes when he is pleased to the heart's core.

“He wills we should have her now and enjoy her,” he said, taking her in his arms.

He is by nature far less impulsive than I am; and God's peace seems to always abide in his heart, making his daily life beautifully consistent and unselfish. O what right have I to such a husband? I often ask myself this question; but he is mine. God has given him to me; and, unworthy as I am of the gift, I do and will rejoice in it. I do not lose sight of his faults, though I mean to think of them only enough to help him as a true wife should; for a true wife I want to be, not a blind worshiper or a mere echo of his opinions, as some wives are.

I wonder if all mothers have to pass through a struggle before yielding to God's higher claim on their own flesh and blood. Since that night I have had a new feeling toward my child; because, though she is mine, given to me by God, she is His first and foremost. I look on her fair young face and fold her to my bosom with an added joy and tenderness, my little God-given treasure, to be yielded up whenever He shall call for her; for, much as I love her, I know He loves her still more tenderly, and far, far more wisely.

But I hope she will be spared to us for a long life-time yet—if it be His will!

CHAPTER III.

GRAHAM'S careless, easy ways about money matters, do annoy me. He is a hard worker in his profession, yet he never makes any headway. Judge Irwin says he is not a *shrewd* lawyer. I'm glad he isn't; I don't consider that a fault! He is apt to take the unpopular side, and get poor rather than rich clients, which isn't a fault either, only sometimes vastly inconvenient, and keeps one constantly anxious lest our expenses should outrun our means.

The house and grounds ought to be better kept up: this might be made such a charming place, if there were walks cut and shrubbery and flowers put out: but we cannot afford to hire it done, and Graham has no more idea how to do it himself than

Bessie ; he has not the least tact or capacity for working with his hands.

We keep the lawn well mowed, and I have a tiny flower-bed, which is the delight of my eyes ; but the place is by no means what it might be if my husband were rich, or what Miss Patty calls “ a *faculized* man.” But we can’t have everything ; if he were shrewd and money-making, perhaps he wouldn’t be the high-minded, upright, noble man in whom I glory. It is so much to know one’s husband can never be bought, or made to do a mean thing !

I wrote here last in the early spring ; and now the golden October light is on the elms. It has been a charming summer, the pleasantest of my whole life. Bessie had no scarlet fever, and has grown plumper and funnier every day. She is almost three, now, though she hasn’t straightened out her grammar yet, and still talks about her

"shoeses and stockingses." I'm in no hurry about that ; for I often think, with a sharp pang, how fast the charm of babyhood is vanishing out of her, and how soon she will be a great, tall, awkward girl, unless she takes after her mother and is an underling. How one wants a child, especially a daughter, to be everything that is beautiful and graceful !

She is a good little puss, on the whole, though she often needs correcting, and is by no means one of the saintly kind that terrify their mothers with fears of early death. She is pretty, too, with beautiful complexion, large, hazel eyes, and brown curls ; at least everybody says so, and her mother is not disposed to contradict it. And how her father doats on her ! I should hardly dare say now I love her best, though, of course, it is in a different way.

Yes, Queen Bess has thriven, and my flower-garden has thriven, the twelve feet square having dazzled our eyes all summer with its pinks, verbenas, gladiolas, and ge-

raniums ; while the little bouquets of mignonette and sweet-peas, which I have kept in-doors, have "fragranted the room," as Bessie phrases it. There never was a lovelier summer ; just sunshine enough and just rain enough to keep everything fresh and growing.

Graham has thriven, too, and in such a wonderful way as astonishes us all, having been just appointed Reporter to the Supreme Court ; and Judge Irwin informs me, with his most pompous bow, that "it is an appointment to be proud of—a distinction seldom conferred on so young a member of the Bar."

Every one says it is great good fortune, and no doubt it is ; but the best of it is that he deserves it. He has always been an indefatigable student, and isn't so very young—thirty-five last June.

"His thorough knowledge of the law, his stainless integrity, as well as his fine general scholarship, admirably fit him for the place ;" so say the newspapers, which the young

wife eagerly devours—when they say such things!

It is pleasant to know he is, at last, appreciated; for it has been all up-hill, and poorly paid work since he began to practice until now; this, perhaps, makes success all the sweeter now it has come. Then it is so nice to have the salary, which will make us really comfortable. I go singing about the house with a light heart, snatching baby Bess up twenty times a day, devouring her with kisses, and telling her all about it.

“I’ve doin’ to be ’Porter, too,” she says.

“So you shall, bless your little heart!” Graham answers; and then they go off into a game of romps, the usual result of his coming into the house.

I wonder how much of enjoyment Jonathan Edwards got out of his children, who always rose up when he entered the room, and stood silently before him!

We are so happy now, I almost tremble for fear it will not last, which Graham says is very foolish.

"If God sends us joy, he asks, "why cloud it over by dreading future storms which may never come? Let us open our hearts and take in all the brightness, and be thankful for it. When we need clouds and storms they will come, and the Lord will be in them as truly as in the sunshine."

I know this is true, and I will try to enjoy everything with a thankful heart.

I wonder if it is wicked not to like all good people. I don't like Mrs. Professor Stone—that is the name she puts on her card—and she is good, I suppose, in her way. I am always annoyed when I see her coming up the steps in her ponderous way; she interrupts whatever I am doing, and always stays to tea; for, being the second wife of a man who married my husband's aunt for his first, she considers herself a near relative, and happens in often, and it is trying. I hardly know why she is so dis-

agreeable. She is very critical for one thing; and when I see her coming I look into every crack and corner to see if there is a speck of dust or a cobweb anywhere; for I know her eyes will look straight at it, the first minute, if there is. I'm afraid she spies at the dust and cobwebs in her neighbors' souls too; she can't help it, perhaps, but it isn't pleasant when so many are hanging around. Then she has a canting tone, when she speaks of religious things, which I can't abide. Why can't she talk about these naturally, as she would of anything else, and not in that sepulchral voice?

I know our tones naturally become reverential in certain states of feeling; but a whine is never reverential. She is very generous in giving to the poor, and I don't doubt is a really religious woman; but I am dumb the moment she begins to talk on religious things. Is it my fault or her's?

Yesterday she told me about Elliott Gray's conversion. Graham and I had greatly rejoiced to know the dear boy had

begun a new life, and had talked of it in tender tones; but she put on her longest face and dismallest whine, and went into details that shocked me. I suppose conversion is just as real and glorious a thing to her as to me; but I could never talk of it in that way; so she thinks I have no feeling, and intimated as much. I haven't a particle in her presence, and I always get her on to housekeeping topics as soon as I can.

She makes splendid hop-yeast and brown bread, and on such matters is really edifying. She thinks I'm a frivolous woman, whose soul never kindles on higher themes. How can she think otherwise? I don't blame her for that; but why is it that one person will draw out the best there is in us and another shut us up into total darkness? But so it is, and I do not see how it can be helped.

After tea, Mrs. Prof. Stone went away, having seen the grease spot on the kitchen floor, the canker-worms on my rose bushes,

and found out my bread was slack-baked, and my preserved quinces a little pricked. I consider myself a good housekeeper, but things are always wrong when my keen-eyed aunt-in-law is about; at other times my floor is clean, my bread well baked, and my fruit sweet and delicious.

It troubles me that I am so stirred up by her; if it is my fault, I want to know it. So when Graham and I were by ourselves, I said,—

“Is it wrong not to like disagreeable people, even if they are good—Mrs. Stone, for example?”

“We certainly ought to value goodness above everything else,” he said.

“Of course we had, and the better people are, the more agreeable they ought to be; but then they are not, you know; and I don’t see why I shouldn’t enjoy a bright, agreeable person whose tastes harmonize with mine, better than one who may be just as good at heart, but has all kinds of hateful, uncomfortable ways.”

"You will enjoy her better, of course; but we ought to be able to recognize and admire genuine goodness everywhere; it is so much better to be good than merely pleasing."

"Oh I know all that," I said; "but it is better to be good and agreeable than good and disagreeable—confess that, now."

"Certainly" he said, laughing, "and for more reasons than one; an agreeable person has so much more influence, besides making others happier. We ought to be pleasing just in proportion as we are good; but we are not, as you say; faults of education and natural peculiarities are not all at once remedied by religion; in time it must soften everything harsh and unlovely, but not all at once."

"And above all things I hate whining," I said; "whining about religious things."

"Yes, if anything should make a person bright and cheerful, it is religion; but we are not all made up alike; we can't all speak in the same tones; and what would be mere

affectation in one person, is natural to another. I sometimes think, dear, you are a little fastidious in mere matters of taste; too quickly repelled by what doesn't suit you. Want of taste may be disagreeable, but it is not a sin. I dare say Peter and Matthew and Thomas didn't always talk of religious things in an agreeable way."

I knew what he meant; they were low-toned spiritually, and dreadfully trying, yet Jesus never became impatient with them. Graham always thinks what Christ would have done, and so keeps calm and charitable, while I fly out into little tempests. I was not hurt by what he said, but I went and did just what I didn't want to—began to cry. I was ashamed of myself, but I couldn't help it.

"I didn't mean to grieve you, dear," he said; "forgive me, if I spoke harshly."

"You didn't, and I'm not grieved. Don't go to thinking I can't bear to be told of my faults. I can. I want to know them and cure them; but somehow everything has

gone wrong and fretted me to-day. I do want to be good and charitable, and love everybody—even if they do talk through their noses,” I added, turning my sob into a laugh.

“I know you do, dear,” and then he said things I cannot repeat; he always so over-values what little good he can find in his poor wife.

“Well, I’m going to try and like Mrs. Prof. Stone,” I said, when this affecting little episode was over, “her whine, sharp eyes, and all.”

“Not like them, Annie, only try to make the best of them, and to see the good that is in her instead of the bad; for she really is a good woman, in spite of what is disagreeable.”

It is curious Graham should think I am fastidious, considering he belongs to an old aristocratic family, while I am nobody. I wonder if I am? Perhaps I do feel too much annoyed by little things. I know I am quick to see the ridiculous, and am al-

ways bringing disgrace on myself by laughing when I shouldn't ; it is well I am not a minister's wife, I should be sure to get him unsettled in a month. But I have no hard feeling ; I just have my laugh, and it is all over. I don't respect Miss Priscilla Prouty any the less for wearing a huge yellow bow on the very tip-top peak of a mazarine blue bonnet ; but I couldn't help laughing when she came mincing along up the aisle and nid-nodding her head, bonnet, bow and all, if it was in the meeting-house. But if the poor soul had seen it, it would have hurt her feelings. I must be more considerate ; less a child, and more a woman.

Graham's weakness is pride, family pride ; he doesn't know he is proud, but he is a real Kingston in that respect. He even has a traditionary theory that the Kingstons are a handsome family ! Well, all I can say is that he, for one, is mortal homely ; not that I care, it is enough for a man to look as if he knew something ; but I often wonder where Bessie got her beauty—not

from her papa or mamma, I am free to say.

Miss Katharine Kingston is coming here soon for a week's visit. She is an aunt of Graham's :

“ the one ungathered rose
On her ancestral tree.”

and he says she is tall and stately, and a bit precise and prim. I hate prim people—I mean I don't like them, and am always afraid of them, shrinking into my uttermost insignificance in their presence.

But Graham admires Aunt Katharine, and I can see is specially anxious she should like his little wife. She is over sixty, I believe, and very highly educated ; rather strong-minded, too, I fancy, from one or two things he has dropped ; “ certainly a little peculiar,” he owns, on being cross-examined. Yes, yes ! well, most people are peculiar. I shall try to do my best ; and, when I do that, I am sure to make a miserable failure !

CHAPTER IV.

BESSIE'S birthday—her third birthday—came on a sunny October day, as bright as her own little self. Long before it was time to get up, I heard her talking to her dolly, a shoeless, one-armed, tattered old thing, which she insists on hugging to her bosom every night.

"Does 'oo know 'oo is free years old to-day?" she asked it, solemnly. "'Oo is, and I must div' 'oo a lot of soogar-plums, and 'oo must be a dood little dirl, Mollie—'oo mus'n't pull up mama's fowers, nor turn down papa's ink-tand, nor run away, nor dit plums out of mamma's toogar-bowl, 'cause oo is a big dirl now, 'oo is."

I listened awhile to this chattering nonsense, and then opened my eyes. As soon

as she saw I was awake, she bounded into our bed and was hugged and kissed, as all three-year-old damsels are, I take it, on their birthday morning. But did any other mother ever love her baby quite so well as I do mine—had ever another child so many bewitching ways? Pshaw! how absurd I am; but it is hard to believe there was ever another darling quite so sweet; babies never put their charms on exhibition before strangers, so only their parents see their most cunning and fascinating ways. But I think it is safe to say no baby was ever more beloved than ours has been from her very birth.

She had a little birthday party, consisting of four little girls about her own age, and wore her white tucked dress, and had a lovely wreath of roses round her pretty curls, and looked like a real queen as she sat at the table pouring white tea into her tiny cups and saucers. There was a pretty frosted cake, with a wreath round it, and each child had what Bessie calls a “tookey-

man," with arms projecting at right angles to his body, and oranges and apples and nuts, and all "went merry as a marriage bell."

Right in the midst of it Miss Katharine Kingston arrived: tall and stately, certainly, but benignant, too. When she found it was Bessie's birthday, she insisted on going out to see the children; and when she had kissed them all round, she said,—

"It's my birthday too, Bessie."

Bess opened her great eyes wide at this, as if trying to comprehend it; then, her face dimpling all over with smiles, she said,—

"Den we jus' of an age, auntie!"

"So we are, darling! bless you, so we are!"

"Only sixty years difference," she said, turning to me.

"Did 'oo have a take and a birthly party, auntie?"

"No, not a bit of either, darling."

"'Oo sall have a piece of my take and a leg of my man tookey." And she presented

them with the air of a genuine queen—"a real Kingston," Aunt Katharine said,—synonymous terms in her vocabulary, I fancy.

I don't object to Bessie's being called a Kingston, since I have seen Aunt Katharine, who must have been a great beauty in her day. She is certainly somewhat peculiar: very tall, perfectly erect, and dressed in quaint, old-time style, with funny little gray curls lying close to her beautiful, broad forehead; her manners are of the old style, too, stately and formal, yet full of a certain benignant grace, as old time manners are. How impossible it would be to call her Kate, or Kitty, or by any less royal name than Katharine, which always takes us back to the court of the old Henries. She took little Bess into her heart at once: it was fortunate she came on the two birthdays, we were all brought together so pleasantly and easily.

It was a happy day from morning till night; and, when the guests had gone, I undressed the tired little queen, too tired even

to say her prayer, and who fell asleep in my arms before she was fairly got into her night-gown. I pressed her to my heart that night, with a new sense of the preciousness of my treasure. Graham and Aunt Katharine were in the parlor talking over old times, and I could not help staying a little while by her crib to watch her in her rosy sleep.

Would my precious one, I wondered, be as sweet and innocent on her next birthday? Never again quite the baby Bess she is now that is impossible. How I wished I could keep her always three years old—a little innocent, sweet, loving child! I often feel that longing, and to-night it was so intense as to actually be a pain. I know how unreasonable and foolish it is. Surely the angels will watch over and shield my darling as the years move on; and He who “giveth his angels charge concerning them,” will see that her soul does not become defiled by sin. He will not cleanse. Why should I fear to commit her to such guardianship?

Mothers who have prayed by their three-year-old baby's crib, know how I prayed that night; and with what tearful eyes I looked out on the starry sky, as I lowered the curtain. Some lines I had heard Graham repeat, kept saying themselves ever in my heart,—

“God *gives* us love. Something to love
He *lends* us; but when love has grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.”

My love is far enough from ripeness yet, and I am glad to know it is so.

“Did you know it was Aunt Katharine's birthday?” said Graham, when I went back to the parlor. “It really is an honor to have her celebrate it by coming to us.”

“An honor and a pleasure,” I said, and said it from my heart.

“It isn't so bad a thing to grow old, as you young folks think,” said Aunt Katharine; “it is only getting a little

nearer home; a little nearer to immortal youth."

There is no cant or whine in her silvery voice when she speaks of heaven; the "home" is evidently so present to her thoughts, that it is as natural to speak of that as of anything else about her. So different from Mrs. Prof. Stone's way; one repels, the other attracts *me*. For aught I know, some might like Mrs. Stone's way best; for I agree with Miss Patty, that "this is a *curis* world, and there's a sight of *curis* folks in it." I suppose we are all *curis* to somebody, though just as natural as life to ourselves.

It is really charming to see how Aunt Katharine and Baby Bess get on together. I never knew the child take so to anybody before; is it because they both have Kingston blood running in their veins? Bessie has queer fancies sometimes, taking to some rough old man, or ragged child, and drawing herself haughtily away from those you expect her to like; and she can never be

coaxed into decent treatment of those she doesn't like. "Just like her mother!" Graham says—"horribly obstinate!"

It has been a charming October without and within; we kept Aunt Katharine three weeks instead of one, and her visit was a great pleasure to us all, and I think she too enjoyed it. When I look at her, it seems a charming thing to grow old; the autumnal brightness is different from the loveliness of spring, but almost more attractive. Why should not our whole life be the going from one glory to another, and the last change, from the terrestrial to the celestial, the crowning glory of all? With Aunt Katharine it will surely be so, for she has lived near to God and heaven, and much of the radiance of heaven is already shining round her. With her, life is almost gone, with Baby Bess, all to come. May it prove pure and religious, whatever else it may be!

I had many nice, strengthening talks with Aunt Katharine; she has known severe trials; and out of them all has come this loving, sweet-hearted woman of sixty-three. Why need I fear to grow old, or to have Baby grow up? If there is sin in the world, there is victory over sin, and always One to save those who believe in Him from sin and its consequences; so let me trust and take courage, quieting all my fears.

I feel that I have gained a most valuable friend in Aunt Katharine, almost a mother; she is so tender and sympathetic, as well as wise and heavenly-minded. I like religious conversation when it is spontaneous, coming from a heart that is fuller of spiritual emotion than any other. I detest cant; but is it not going to the opposite extreme to never speak of Christ and heaven? I do not hesitate to talk about Bessie and my love for her, for fear somebody should think I am hypocritical, and pretending to more feeling than I really have; neither do I whine when I talk about her—why should I? And why

should I whine when I speak of Christ and his love? When our hearts are brimming over with love and grateful joy, the words flow out spontaneously and naturally.

If we were going to Europe in a few weeks, and were busy with our preparations, would it not be unnatural never to speak of it to our dearest friends—of how we were to go, and what we expected to see and do there? Just so unnatural, it seems to me, is it to live in close intimacy with friends, and never once exchange a word in regard to that land toward which we are all so rapidly hastening; why in this, as in other things, should not the mouth speak out of the abundance of the heart?

I know there are great differences of temperament, as well as of education and habit; so that with some silence is the natural instinct, as utterance is with others; and we should all be spontaneous and natural; and above all, charitable; the silent not denouncing those who talk, nor the talkers those who keep silence.

When religious feeling seeks expression and finds it naturally, it certainly adds greatly to the richness and joy of our communion with friends on earth. But there is something painful in the apparently flippant, irreverent manner in which a soul's most sacred feelings are sometimes laid bare before the public; such, surely, can never be the fitting or natural expression of a deeply religious soul; still, I would be slow to criticize any sincere utterance; for sincerity is the great thing in the sight of God.

I believe my besetting sin is uncharitably judging others. I wish I could get more of Aunt Katharine's beautiful spirit of charity into my soul—the very charity of the Gospel that not only speaketh, but *thinketh* no evil. She sees the good in everybody, and when forced to look at the evil, it evidently pains her pure soul. But it is hard to cure one's besetting sin; when you congratulate yourself on having pretty well subdued it, there it is, popping up its head, just as alert and vigorous as ever! Well,

perhaps if I live thirty-five years longer, and have as many trials as Aunt Katharine, may attain to a little of her sweetness.

Must it come through trial—is suffering the only way in which holiness can be reached? I so shrink from suffering! How could I bear to lose all I love best, as she has, and be left alone in the world without husband or child? But how foolish I am to be thinking of evils that will probably never come! Let me enjoy the sunshine while it lasts, as Graham says, and trust for the future.

Mary Sterling, who is my chief young lady friend, is a great comfort to me. She is younger than I, but she likes the same people and the same books I do, and to talk about the same things. Graham is compelled to be away from home a good deal attending court, and she runs in and spends the long evenings with me, and we sometimes read aloud and sometimes have long talks—heart-talks, that do a body good.

She and Graham have been reading Ger-

man together whenever he finds leisure. I have not the least fancy for languages; the most I can do is to speak my own decently; but Graham is a good German scholar and thoroughly enjoys these readings. It is charming to see Mary's delight in both German and Graham—her two enthusiasms, I call them. She looks up to him as if he were the very Delphian oracle; and when he reads some fine passage, her eye kindles and her whole face becomes radiant;—a sweet, lovely face it is, beautiful in the best sense, mirroring every feeling of her soul—just the face I like to sit and watch. Dear girl! we both admire and love her; and she says our love is a great blessing to her, for she has few intimate friends. She is reserved, except to those she loves, and most people consider her cold and haughty, but we find her frank and very loving.

It was curious that, just after writing that,

I should have been made terribly indignant by Mrs.—no, I won't put her name on paper, but call her Mrs. Gossip. She had made a fearfully long call, and had at last got up to go, when she said, in a most confidential whisper,—

“I hear Mary Sterling is at your house a good deal, Mrs. Kingston.”

“Yes,” I answered, wondering what was in the wind.

“Well, Mrs. Kingston, I don't know as I ought to say anything; but people will talk, you know, and Mrs. Jones thought you really ought to know it—folks do say she's *very* fond of your husband; and such a pretty girl, you know!”

I don't know what I said exactly, but something that sent her out of the house in quick metre, and angry, too, I dare say. What does the woman mean? Does she suppose I am such a mean, jealous old thing that I don't want my husband to enjoy a pretty young girl as well as I do? Thank goodness, I'm not, and that I have a hus-

band I can trust without one misgiving, even as he trusts me! Mary was at that moment in the library reading with him; and when I went in, I looked into her true hazel eyes with a new feeling of admiration, and kissed her good-bye more tenderly that night than I ever had in my life before.

The next time I met Mrs. Gossip was at the sewing-society, and I took a wicked pleasure in saying in her hearing that "Mr. Kingston could not come; it was his evening for reading with Miss Sterling." How it will set her tongue running! I suppose I ought not to have said it, but how could I help it? I love Mary Sterling dearly, and Graham loves her, and she loves us both, and I pity people who can only think low thoughts!

And Mrs. Gossip talks about women's rights, and the injustice done them, and all that. Yes, women should have their rights, social and political, if anybody can find out what they are; but, above all things, they should lift themselves out of the slough of

malignant gossip; above their petty aims and low, mean lives; thus emancipating themselves from their worst degradation;—an emancipation to be achieved by themselves, and not by legislation or extraneous aid.

Mary Sterling is so far above all this! She fought her way up to a fine education through many difficulties; and her love of knowledge, for its own sake, is wonderful. I look up to her as my superior in most things, and rejoice to do so; thankful that the beautiful gifts denied to me have been granted to others. Yes, I will love her, and admire all that is good and noble in her, in spite of all the Mrs. Gossips in the world!

Graham and I had a good laugh when I told him what I said at the sewing-society. "I'm afraid it will take poor Mrs. Gossip's breath quite away," I said.

"Perhaps it would be a good thing if it did," answered my spouse; the severest thing I ever heard him say.

"A vast deal of misery grows out of such

abominable gossip," he added ; " out of petty jealousies and concealments, too. Of course, there may be danger in a familiar intercourse between married men and young women, where both are not high principled and right-minded ; men and women who are not pure, are not safe anywhere ; but I think some women alienate their husbands by their want of confidence, and by taking it for granted that something is wrong if a young lady comes into the house. Trust is the basis of all true love, and when one is lost the other is pretty sure to follow."

" But in a marriage without true love, a wife may well be anxious," I said.

" Yes," he answered, " but then everything is wrong from beginning to end."

Are there many such happy marriages as mine? I ask myself often. I suppose all old married fogies hug themselves in the same dear delusion ; but in my case it is no delusion ; we thoroughly confide in and respect each other, and this helps us to overlook a great deal, and be patient with one another's

faults. And my husband's love is of that kind which honors and elevates any woman, if I say it, who ought not. Marriage, where there is genuine love and Christian principle, must elevate and ennoble; but woe to that woman or that man who mistakes a mere fancy, having no basis in real respect and honor, for genuine love; when his or her eyes are opened, dislike and contempt will too surely follow. I can never be thankful enough, that in my youthful impulses I was saved from that fatal mistake;—a most wretched woman I should have been, had I waked from a fond delusion to find my husband what some men are!

CHAPTER V.

SNOW is on the ground now, and Christmas has just gone—such a different day from last year's! No little stocking hanging in the corner; no shout of childish glee ringing through the house, but silence and tears instead. For God has taken my baby—my precious one, my queen, my heart's delight, my darling! I have no baby now: what a great ache comes when I think of it; and when do I forget it? My eyes are a fountain of tears; yet I loved early to think of her, and of all she was; yes, and of all she is, too.

Her illness came suddenly—only a week after Aunt Katharine left us, when she seemed perfectly healthy and strong: it was

diphtheria, that mysterious disease which seizes its victim so savagely, strangling the life out in an instant. She had played about the house all day, and flew to the door as usual when her father came home at tea-time; and before morning she was suffering terribly, and in forty-eight hours was gone!

It is pleasant now to remember that last evening—the undressing and putting her into her little crib. How gleeful she was, and how full of funny little antics, running about the room in her night-gown, bobbing little courtesies to the chairs, with her bright eyes full of mischief, seeking by all kinds of devices to delay being put to bed. Ah! had we only known it was the last time our darling would ever have one of her wild little frolics, how reluctant we should have been to shorten it! But I finally quieted her, and she came and knelt down at my knee, putting her dear little head in my lap as usual, and saying her little prayer, adding to the few lines, “Bless dear papa and mamma”—putting in of her own head—

"and love them dearly—and make me a dood little girl, for Jesus' sake, Amen."

Those precious, bird-like tones—I think they will always linger in my ear. She will never talk plainly, now; never in our earthly speech. I have had my wish—my darling will never outgrow her babyhood—never be but three years and one month old!

I was not waked that night till about two o'clock; then she cried out, "Mam-ma, mam-ma," in a shrill, unnatural voice, and seemed to be in great pain, but I could not find out where. "Baby sick—baby sick all over," was all she could tell. After trying some simple remedies without effect, Graham went for the doctor, who at first spoke lightly of her illness; but, in a few hours, she was very sick and terribly distressed. I dare not think much about that day and the following night; it was all hard to bear; and at last her sufferings were so intense, I was willing to see her breathe her last—my little cherished one, my lamb, my darling!

I feared then I should never be able to think of her without that agonized look, but her old bright face has come back to me now in all its sweetness, and I seem to hear her dancing step and her ringing laugh about the house ; I am so glad of this, for it would have been dreadful to be always haunted by that poor, pinched, suffering little face.

I was with her every moment, holding her in my arms a good deal of the time, as she seemed quieter there ; and her last words were, “ ‘Yes, mam-ma,’ ” with a closer snuggling down to my heart. She lived some hours after, but was unconscious and never spoke again.

When all was over, I bathed the dear little face and body with my own hands, putting on one of her white dresses with its pretty embroidered waist, tying the little strings with a fearful choking at my throat ; but I could not have let anyone else do it—the last that could be done for my baby ! We laid beautiful flowers about her, and

she never looked lovelier than when lying in the little open casket ; only so cold and still.

Graham closed the casket with his own hands, and carried her to the carriage in which we rode, lifting her out at the Cemetery and laying her in the grave. We could not bear that strange hands should do anything for our darling ; she was so little and timid, and clung so to us ! I kept quite calm through all this ; much calmer than Graham, who broke down completely more than once. I had a sweet sense of having laid my little lamb on the bosom of Jesus, my darling and his darling, which sustained me. But I broke down afterwards, and was in bed a fortnight, too weak to speak or even think. Aunt Katharine came to us then—dear Aunt Katharine, with her quiet, old-fashioned ways, and her warm, young heart—what a blessing she was ! It was pleasant to yield myself to her nursing and take no thought for anything. I slept most of the time for two weeks ; but the waking must

come, and it was terrible, with that strange sense of something gone out of my house and heart. I could gladly have yielded to the listlessness and made no effort, but I knew I ought to rouse myself, and come back to life and its cares; and when I shook off the lethargy and sat up again and was dressed, Graham's pleased, happy look repaid me for the effort.

"This is like old times," he said; and then we both burst into tears, and felt how different it was and always would be. But with his true heart to lean on, I could not repine. I had never clung to him as I did then; as I do now; my true-hearted, noble husband, who never fails me.

Seven weeks have gone, and I am getting accustomed to living without my baby; though, if I see one of her playthings, or a little worn shoe with the prints of her rosy toes in it, the agony all comes back.

Yet I have not suffered so keenly as I expected. It was well I had that struggle with myself months ago, and so fully gave

her up to Him ; for, with all my tears and the aching, very sharp sometimes, no pain has been like that when I said, "I cannot give her up!" Under the billows of sorrow, there has been, deep down in my heart, a blessed peace ; and, though my heart was well-nigh breaking, I could say, "She is Thine, Lord ; Thou canst not harm her : Thy will be done." When she was first taken ill, I prayed earnestly night and day that she might be spared. But a little before her death, I had such a consciousness of Christ's presence that it was almost like a vision of Him standing by me ; and, looking at me very tenderly, he seemed to ask in a pleading voice, "Will you not let *me* take the baby—can you not trust me, even with her?" Could I say, "No, Lord"?

I never think of her as alone, but always as with Him, softly tended by the loving angels. But then I am so lonely—so lonely ! I hope I have not rebelled, but waves of desolation will at times sweep over me ; though, as I have said, underneath them all

is peace. I know I shall be happy again, not exactly in the old way, but quietly and truly happy ; even now I can at times rejoice that my darling is never to know pain or sorrow again ; her whole life was crowded brimming full of brightness and sunshine till those last two days. Only two days of sorrow in her whole eternity ! Happy Bessie, and selfish mother who would have kept you back from heavenly bliss !

I never knew till now what it must have cost the Shunamite mother to say, "It is well with the child." It was so much harder for her, for Jesus had not then taken little children into his arms and blessed them.

Everybody has been kind ; some so unexpectedly so my heart was greatly touched. Poor Katy O'Brien, who lived with me the two first years of Bessie's life, walked three miles to get some sweet peas that were growing in a box at a friend's house, because Bess was so fond of them. Her pitying look, as she said,—

"Please, ma'am, and would ye just be

after puttin' 'em in her own swate little hand?" went to my heart. They were put there, and "fragranted" the room.

Miss Patty Train, too, came, with her voice all in a quiver,—

"I can't say a word—I can't!" she cried, and sank down into a chair, sobbing like a baby.

There was genuine sympathy in her poor withered-up heart that had never had a baby to cry for, and I valued it; but before she went away she worried me dreadfully by asking all sorts of questions that pierced the raw spot cruelly;—she did not mean to hurt me, and how could she know she did? I am trying to bear patiently all true attempts at consolation, however painful. I know how very hard it is to express sympathy in bereavement without paining, we are so differently constituted; and at such times the heart is so very tender and shrinking.

Mrs. Stone was out of town when Bessie left us, but she came to see me directly after

ner return. How I dreaded to see her very face and hear her dismal tones! But I think on the whole she did me good; she made me speak cheerfully by contrast, and she made me think of the dust and cobwebs, which was good for me. I know she thought I hadn't a particle of feeling, but I could not talk of my sorrow to her who never had, nor lost a child. Poor woman! can that be the reason, I wonder, that she seems so unsympathetic and unfeeling? She stayed to tea and praised my milk-toast and cookies; they were nice, and how could she know how my heart ached when I rolled them out, because there was no need to make "tookey mans" any more!

Christmas was a hard day, especially in the morning; it was impossible not to recal the bewilderment and delight of our darling last year, and her pretty prattle about "Santa Caws," and to weep a little over the sad silence that now fills the house. It came on Sunday, and we went to church; the fine music and the finer sermon lifted

us out of our selfish regret, till we could heartily respond to the anthems of praise and thanksgiving that went up all over Christendom, "that unto us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Who, indeed, should heartily rejoice in His birth if not those whose best beloved ones have been taken to be with him in his risen glory?

Aunt Katharine kept Christmas with us; we trimmed the house with lovely evergreen wreaths as usual, and gave our gifts to those poorer than ourselves; though, when I carried some gifts to Tim Maloney's, I confess, with her six children, that mother seemed the rich and I the poor one. My heart is very tender now towards all little children, though it always gives me a pang to see a little girl of Bessie's age. I am so glad Aunt Katharine knew and loved our darling. Last night she said to Graham,—

"I have been thinking how your mother will enjoy Bessie in heaven; she was so passionately fond of little children."

"And you think she loves them still?" I said.

"With Christ and like Christ, and *not* love little children! that can never be," she said, almost reprovingly.

"Do you suppose little children still remain little children, then?" said Graham.

That question had continually risen in my mind, but I did not reason much upon it, for I did not want to be argued out of my belief that they do. Longfellow's lines keep haunting me,—

"Not as a child shall we again behold her;
For when with rapture wild,
In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child,

"But a fair maiden in her Father's mansion,
Clothed with celestial grace,
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
Shall we behold her face."

And then that still more cruel line,—

"Where she no longer needs our poor protection,

no longer needs to be taken up and rocked watched over and tended ; a bitter truth, if it be one, to a mother whose baby has just been taken out of her arms. I listened to hear what Aunt Katharine would say ; she said nothing, except,—

“ I don’t know ; we have not been told.”

“ But of such is the kingdom of heaven,” I said.

“ By that may be meant that only such as are of a child-like spirit, as trustful and teachable as little children, are to enter that kingdom of heaven,” said Graham.

“ But is not the longing of every mother’s heart a prophecy ?” I asked—“ an instinct too strong for God to disappoint ? And what a cheerless heaven it would be without any children !”

“ But children are constantly going there,” he said, “ so there may be no lack of children, even if our own have grown.”

“ And heaven full of weeping Rachels who will not be comforted, because their children are not ! Other people’s children

would never satisfy me, nor any other mother!" I said.

I spoke sharply, and was sorry for it in a moment; and crept nearer to my husband, laying my head on his shoulder, and begging him to be patient with his poor weak wife.

It is easy to be selfish in our griefs, and I am sure I have been. Graham has felt our loss just as keenly as I, but he has been far more considerate of others. There is always a look of pain in his face when he comes home at night and finds no little Bessie dancing down the walk to meet him—no joyful shout of welcome; but in a moment he smiles, and is as cheery as ever, and far more tender; and I want to be made less selfish and every way better by this sore affliction, so that my darling may not have died in vain.

That evening Deacon Jessup came in—good old homely Deacon Jessup;—a childless man who has buried five young children. I have often seen the row of little

graves in the cemetery, and thought what heart-aches he and his wife must have had. He took my hand, pressing it till it ached ; but it was a kindly grasp, and there were tears in his eyes when he said,—

“God’s ways are not as our ways, Miss Kingston.”

Now Mrs. Stone had said the very same words ; and it sounded as if she thought she must say something out of the Bible, because there had been a death in the house ; but in the good deacon’s mouth they sounded very differently. Bessie had been very fond of the good old man ; and his hearty “Good morning, my little lady,” was sure to bring out a “Dood morning, Misser Jessy,” in response, and the very last time she went into the street, she ran away from me to meet him, crying out merrily, “Toss me up, Misser Jessy, toss me up, up, *way up* to the sky !” and he came into the yard and jumped her up and down as high as his long arms cou’d reach, to her great delight ; she screaming and telling him, with a com-

ical twist of her little head, "I'm Mother Bunch, I am," and we all laughed heartily, and the deacon said,—

"Children are curis little critturs."

So I was drawn to him, and when he said, "God's ways are not as our ways," adding, "but they are good ways, Miss Kingston," I knew how hard it must be for him to say that from his heart, with those five little children all lying under the snow. But a laughing face with tossing curls rose up so vividly before me, I could not speak for an instant; and he saw it, and sat down by my husband, and talked about the weather. After a while Graham propounded to him the same question we had been discussing, Whether those who died in infancy would still remain little children in heaven?

"Now, Squire, that's a thing I've thought about a great deal, year in and year out, as I may say," he answered, with a little quiver in his voice, "for I've a good many little ones there, you know, and if they are still little I should like to know it. I should like

to have 'em kept little, if it's for the best. But then I've sometimes thought maybe 'twouldn't be quite fair to them to keep 'em from growing any."

"But little children are so happy," I said.

"Yes, in their little way, so they be; but you see it's the natur' of things to grow and keep a growin'; and I don't suppose a little child's sperrit could take in so much heavenly blessedness as a bigger one; 'twould be pleasanter for you and me, Miss Kingston, to find 'em when we get there lookin' jest as they did when we was a trottin' on 'em on our knees; but mightn't it be sort of selfish to have 'em kept back just for that?"

Was I selfish still, thinking of my own pleasure instead of Baby's good? But I said nothing.

"Sometimes I've thought," continued he, "that ma'be, just to please us, He'd let 'em be babies till we got to 'em agin—'twon't be long, you know—and so let us have the pleasure of seein' 'em grow up under our

own eye. But the truth is, we don't know. but dreadful little about such things, because He hain't told us; but then I don't worry one mite about it;—He'll fix it all right—yes, exactly right. If it's best to have 'em stay little children there, they will; and if it 'taint, they won't. There's but just one thing we know for sartain," he added, "that they are His lambs, and He's the Good Shepherd."

"And that is enough!" said Graham, softly.

"Yes," I said, softly too, silently adding, to myself, "neither will I worry; He'll fix it right; yes, exactly right."

"I thought a good deal of your little gal," he said, when he got up to go, "'twas hard for you to give her up. I know all about it;" and he wiped his eyes with the back of his hand; "but, then, they'll be there a waitin' for us, Miss Kingston, and we shall find it's all exactly right."

So we shall. I will not yield to selfish doubts; I will not even wish to keep my

child from growing up into the stature of the tallest angel, if God so chooses.

How a little faith clears one's vision! I would give more for such an undoubting faith as Deacon Jessup's, than for all the knowledge in the world without it.

CHAPTER VI.

GRAHAM has read aloud to me a good deal these winter evenings; it is good of him to give me so much time when he is so pressed by business; but he says it always rests and refreshes him to sit down with me in this quiet way. I hope it does; but I feel sure the real reason is that he knows how sorely I miss Bessie then.

He has taken up some of the old English poets, of whom I knew almost nothing, and I have quite fallen in love with Herbert and George Withers; their heavenly thoughts and quaint, musical rhymes fall deliciously on both heart and ear. Vaughan is another of Graham's favorites. We have not got so very far beyond these men, after all our

boasted progress; nor so much nearer to God and heaven! Graham first learned to relish these authors when he was in college; and Aunt Katharine, who fairly revels in old English literature, used to get him to read aloud to her; it was a good thing for him to acquire a taste for this wholesome literature; and, during the busy years that have followed, he has always found time for general reading; and I see that even in his office library a good many miscellaneous authors crop out from among the musty old law-books.

A bad thing this in Judge Irwin's eyes, who shakes his head when he sees them, and says,—

“Law is a jealous mistress, my young friend; and he who would win her favors, must beware how he flirts with other charmers.”

He always will call Graham young. Well, at seventy, perhaps a man of thirty-five does seem youngish; and I do suppose Graham's chances for dying a Chief-Justice on the Su-

preme Court bench are not so good as if he never opened anything but a law-book; but I am sure he is a better husband and a happier man. It keeps him from being one-sided; and helps him to take broad, comprehensive views, as all men should.

Now and then we have one of Shakespeare's plays, which Graham reads admirably; and, among other things, we have read this winter "Emerson's Essays." Graham enjoys Emerson in a certain way; he is so suggestive of new thought, and so stimulates and rouses him intellectually; but I follow his mystical flights with difficulty, and feel a sad sense of want at the end. Graham has no sympathy with some of his views, and acknowledges he does not satisfy.

"But he leads you into such vast, grand ranges of thought and speculation," he says, "and quickens all your faculties into such a keen activity."

"Yes," I answer, "but he seems always reaching out after truth, without finding it."

“Well, the reaching out is a good thing; the very aspiration is expanding and ennobling.”

“But painful, too,” I said, “if the search is to be always baffled. Does our Father mean his children should be always groping in darkness, among mists and shadows?”

“No,” said Graham, his eye kindling, “no, he does not! Christ has come, and says, ‘*I am the light of the world*,’ and ‘He that followeth me shall *not* walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ What could be more positive than that? No, Annie, much as I enjoy that style of authors, in a certain way, I see more and more, as I read them, how Christ, and Christ only, sheds light on the great problems of life; without Him they are all unsolved, and such speculations give me a deeper and more profound reverence for Him and His words, they make me see, too, how necessary it was that God should become incarnate—‘God manifest in the flesh’—that we might get some clear and just conception of Him, and not be left

forever groping about in doubt as to what He is and what is to be our future destiny. Yes, Mr. Emerson is a wonderful man, a splendid thinker and soarer, but even his soul is dark till the true Light shines into it! Christ says, 'I am the way;' and, soar as lofty as the human intellect may, if it find not Him, it finds not the way, nor the Truth."

"Nor the Life," I said, softly.

"No, most emphatically not the Life. 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life;' and He says, 'I am the bread of life; if any man shall eat of this bread, he shall live forever.' No, there is no true, glorious, blessed, eternal life where Christ is not."

"Yet how many shut out this life," I said; "how many wretched, starving souls there are in the world who are longing for joy, and yet keep looking for it where it never can be found!"

"Yes, this is the saddest of all sad facts," said Graham, "and the one I can least comprehend."

Reading that compelled thought, has been good for me this winter; sentimental fiction is not what a wounded heart that needs bracing, not weakening, requires; nothing tones up and exhilarates like a little hard study. "Nothing of the best comes without labor," as Graham says.

We talk a good deal about heaven in these days; how can we help it when our one little ewe-lamb is there, instead of in our bosoms. We wonder what heaven is like, what Bessie is doing there, and whether she thinks of us and the old home? But all our speculations do not carry us much beyond good Deacon Jessup's conclusion,— "He'll fix it all just right."

The more we talk about it, the more I feel how little we really know about heaven; that is, of the details of the life they are living there. We can indulge in delightful theories, but they are only theories. I won-

der that no more is revealed. Every one who has lost a friend, has followed him into the spirit world with intense longings for more knowledge of that life—what is he doing? what is he thinking of? is he conscious of the old life, conscious of us, our love, our agony, our longings?

We besiege the heavens with our importunate cries, but how silent the heavens are! never a voice comes back; never the faintest echo to still our longings. The beautiful blue sky is radiant; the air breathes round us with its soft, spirit-like sighing; the birds fly far away into its clear depths, but from none of them comes a word or a sign from our lost ones. It is only from the Bible that we know even so much as that there is a life beyond. "I am the resurrection and the life,"—"Because I live, ye shall live also,"—are the words that make this sure; but the Bible gives us only outlines of that future state—grand glorious ones, to be sure, but still only outlines. It tells us of the many mansions, but not how they are

furnished, nor how the occupants are employed. It speaks of the glory which shall be revealed, but not in what that peculiar glory consists. John, in the Revelation uses the most glowing imagery to convey to us impressions of the sinlessness, the rest, the brightness and beauty of heaven, but none of the details for which our hearts yearn are given. I am struck by this silence; I wonder why, having told so much, he tells no more.

I talked this over with Graham. "God doesn't seem to want we should know much about heaven," I said. "When a friend dies, the door is shut between us; he literally passes within the veil, and we see and hear nothing more of him. Why is this?"

"Perhaps because heavenly things cannot be told. You can't teach a five-year-old child how the planets move in their orbits, nor why the moon changes in size every night; you don't try to; if he asks you questions, you say, 'Wait, my child; by-and-bye, when you are able to understand it.

you shall hear all about it.' It sounds very much like this when we are told, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him.' For it doth not yet appear what we shall be.' When anybody attempts to definitely map out the inconceivable glory, it seems to me very much like a child's calculating eclipses or predicting the appearance of a comet. All spiritual life is a mystery, and heaven cannot but be beyond our grasp while we are in the flesh, from its very nature."

"I almost hope some of Swedenborg's theories may prove true," I said, "they are such beautiful ones."

"Very beautiful; but I imagine all who reach heaven will find something even far more beautiful and glorious than these has been prepared," said Graham. "I am glad it is Christ, and not Swedenborg or any other mortal man, who is to prepare the mansion. '*I go to prepare a mansion.*' is

a very delightful assurance, for he alone knows what a human soul requires to perfect and bless it. Human planners are apt to make heaven very much like this world over again, only a little greener and fairer, and fuller of sunshine and flowers."

"Well, this world does sometimes seem lovely and good enough to live in forever," I said, "if the sin were only gone—a great *if* that, I know."

"Some have a theory that the new heavens and earth are to be these same dear old ones, refitted and purged of all that mars or defiles them. You would like that, Annie."

"Yes; it is a pleasant idea," I said.

"It may be the true one; we can't say, because we are not told; but in God's great universe there may be places still more attractive; I think there probably are; but we need not trouble ourselves about it; the sense of the beautiful which God has given us, will doubtless be gratified there to the full by Him who has made this world so fair. The locality is of small account: our

surroundings will no doubt be adapted to us; and what we are to be there is the main thing. And we know a good deal about that; we are to be made spotlessly clean and white; to be without one impure desire; one low, mean, selfish thought; to be filled with all high and noble aspirations; with all truth and knowledge, and glowing with perfect love—with Christ and like Christ—ah! that will indeed be a heaven worthy of an immortal soul!”

“I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness,” I said.

“Yes, no human desire can go beyond that, or even begin to conceive of it,” said Graham; “and if, as some imagine, the spiritual body is but an expression, an outgrowth, as it were, of the spirit, how very pure and lovely it must be! Paul answers the question, ‘How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?’ by saying, ‘God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him;’ and that is enough, for only the best possible one would please Him. he adds,

‘and to every seed his own body;’ that is, I suppose, that the germ of life, the soul, the immortal part, will have its own individual body; but just what the form of it will be, we are not told, nor need we be; we can safely leave all that with Him who fashioned our present ones so wondrously.”

“Yes, indeed;” I said.

“I think more *is* told us about that future state, Annie, than you think; the texts that speak of it, when we examine them carefully, contain more meaning than they seem to at the first glance; take, for instance, this one: ‘For it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know’—this much we are certain of—‘that, when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him.’ Now, what a wealth of meaning lies in these two words; look at them—think of them—‘*Like Him.*’ What does it mean? That we shall be filled with all truth, for one thing; for He is truth. What an inspiring idea!—to get at the truth, the pure truth, without any mixture of error and to be true, with no shams, or de-

ceptions, or falsities about us—how glorious!—the very thought of it is like taking draughts of fresh air into the soul! Here, we are fettered and hemmed in; there, the realm will be boundless, and our power of comprehension forever enlarging, and we shall get—not conjectures, doubts, theories, ingenious and brilliant speculations—but verities—truth. Then we shall know how much or how little absolute truth there is in the perplexing theories our scientific men are broaching now. Oh, I long to know *the truth* about geology, and astronomy, and a thousand other things!”

“You don’t expect to study such things there!” I said.

“To be sure I do; why not?”

“When you get there, perhaps you won’t care to know about anything but God and spiritual truths.”

“How can we thoroughly understand God while ignorant of His works and the laws by which He made and governs them? I can’t but think that one object He had in

creating such myriads of wonderful worlds was, that His creatures, through them, might learn to understand Him; and I think He would hardly have given us capacities for such investigations to nip them just in the bud, and when we are stepping out of this world into one still more wonderful. Truth is the food of the soul, and knowledge lies at the basis of all truth."

"But He reveals himself so much more fully in our own souls," I said.

"True, but the two do not conflict. God can't teach one thing in the soul, and a contradictory one in the stars and rocks."

"But knowledge of spiritual truths must surely be the highest kind of knowledge," I said.

"Certainly, and the best kind; but all knowledge is good; and the material and the spiritual so run into and influence each other, that it is hard to separate them in this life—perhaps in any life. This world alone, viewed by the light of truth, would furnish material for study for an indefinite period;

and then think of a whole universe of worlds, all filled with manifestations of the power, wisdom, and love of the same Creator and Father, waiting to be understood! Surely eternity will be none too long to learn all there is to know, even of the works of this great Creator—their Father and our Father!”

“Do you suppose knowledge will come to us, there, without any effort of ours? or shall we have to work for it, as we do here?” I asked.

“Oh work for it, I hope!” he said; “study is too pure and intense a pleasure to be given up. Besides, it is not God’s way to pour out his treasures into merely passive recipients.”

“Hard study isn’t such intense delight to everybody,” I said; “it tires some people dreadfully—your poor wife, for one. I should much prefer to have things come to me.”

“I doubt it; your mind enjoys study, only your body gets tired; and there, active

minds won't be pent up in poor, weak bodies—there won't be any getting tired there.”

“Oh, how nice that will be!” I said; “think of poor Mary Beebe, who has never been anything but tired all her life. Won't rest be the thing she will enjoy most?”

“The thing she will have, then, probably. I have no idea we shall all be doing precisely the same thing; variety, infinite variety, is the law of the universe, so far as we know, and there is no reason to suppose we shall all be exactly the same in heaven any more than here.”

“Only we shall all be loving children,” I said.

“Yes; all dutiful, loyal subjects—all obedient, loving children,” he replied.

“And that is a vast deal to have in common.”

“Yes, indeed it is; the difference of differences must always be between those who obey and serve, and those who rebel and do not serve—the loyal and the disloyal. And while I rejoice to think all our intel-

lectual capacities will be expanded into glorious breadth and strength, it is far more satisfactory to know we shall be like Christ in our spiritual natures, be in full sympathy with Him in His love and purity and holiness. Yes, wife, those words, *like Him*, are a vast revelation of what our friends in heaven are doing, and of what we shall do if we ever join them! Think how pure and holy Jesus was; how tenderly He loved every human being; how deep an interest He took in every little incident that concerned them—so minute an interest, that He said, ‘Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered,’ and how He was constantly doing something for the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the sorrowful, and we get a great insight into what we shall do in heaven.

“You are right, Annie,” he said, after a pause, “to be like Christ in His love is far more than to be like Him in His knowledge, if we were forced to choose between them; they harmonize and strengthen each other;

more knowledge will help us to love more ; and more love help us to know more. Oh, Annie, to think of loving like Christ as well as with Him ! isn't it enough to make one long to soar away to that better life at once ! But, then, we can bring heaven to earth by becoming more and more like Christ every day we live—that, after all, is the true glory of heaven !”

I sometimes think Graham is too much given to speculations, and to “ mapping out the inconceivable glory ” himself ; but he says he means to go only so far as the Bible sanctions him in doing. He lives far nearer to God and heaven than most do ; perhaps such get a clearer insight into truth ;—I am sure they do. For myself, I can only in meekness and lowliness try to do the Master's will in my own poor, every-day way ; and then, perhaps, I too shall one day know what heaven is like and what it is to be like Christ. Ineffably good and glorious—I see and feel that.

But I enjoy living in this world just as it

is, even after my great sorrow, which I never forget. This has been a pleasant winter, in spite of its heart-aches, very pleasant, but in an entirely different way from all other winters—not gaiety, not joy, but resignation has marked it.

Had anybody told me a year ago that Bessie would die in November, and that I should have a pleasant winter, how monstrous I should have thought it! I cannot understand it now—cannot help wondering that I have not suffered more. There have been keen agonies, sore heart-aches, but they have been short, and a sweet peace *abides*. Can it be *His* peace? Is it possible that to such a weak, sinful creature as I, the Comforter has indeed come; I must believe this, and that it is His presence that cheers me. To His disciples, He said, “We will come unto Him and make our abode with Him.” What thrilling words and what a stupendous truth! I believe it; believe that into the weakest, saddest heart that opens to receive this divine Guest the Father and the

Son will come and abide; and the exalted joy that abiding brings, what words can express? The divine dwelling in the human, the Infinite in the finite;—how marvellous! how glorious! This must be the real foretaste of heavenly joy—the truest heaven we can know on earth! I can rejoice that Bessie is happier than she could have been here. I did want her; I do want her now more than words can tell; but, when I think of all the sweetness and purity of heaven, I seem to hear her ask, “Would you keep me back from all this, mother?”

No! I will not mourn that my baby is an angel. I will bear my loneliness and heart-aches patiently, remembering that I am the mother of a child clothed in all the grace, the beauty, the holiness of heaven. I hoped a great deal for my darling, but never anything so glorious as this! And she will not forget me; she will be watching and waiting for me. How careful must I be to keep my soul free from stain for her dear sake! To see her mother’s soul foul with sin, might

dim her bright eyes, even in heaven. Oh, help me, Lord, to live worthy of the child Thou hast given to me, and as the mother of a spirit in glory should!

CHAPTER VII.

SPRING has come again; the air is full of tender thrills, the buds are everywhere swelling and the flowers springing. I dreaded the spring, thinking it would be harder to have my baby dead when everything else was full of life, but I do not find it so. I rejoice that it is life and not death that pervades the universe.

I strolled through a beautiful old wood this morning, and the new life stirring there gave me inexpressible delight; as I leaned against the trunk of an oak tree, I could almost feel the sap creeping up through each vein and fibre, carrying a wealth of greenness and beauty to its outermost stem and branch; how it would change that brown,

leafless, unsightly tree into a mass of living verdure and loveliness that would delight the eye of every passer-by! What a touching type of the human soul was that tree—dark, cold, and barren till breathed upon by the divine Spirit, kindling it into indescribable beauty, grace and fruitfulness. How one longs for this inward quickening, when all nature is being thus revived! Each spring the world seems more enchantingly beautiful, more full of love and light and joy. Coleridge says:

“Ours is her wedding-garment; ours her shroud.”

I am glad that to me it is the wedding-garment, not the shroud.

But there are sad hearts which this cheering spring warmth does not penetrate; the sick and suffering suffer still, though all the air is filled with light and fragrance. Mary Beebe, poor soul, is dying of consumption; her little Laura survived the scarlet-fever, but she is blind, and probably will be all her life in consequence. Soon after Bessie's

death, the mother came to see me, and I could well understand the tremor in her voice when she said,—

“There are troubles harder to bear than yours, Mrs. Kingston.”

Yes, indeed; she, with that invalid child and a miserably intemperate husband, had a far heavier burden, I knew. I wanted to comfort her;—I who had so much to rejoice in—my darling safe in heaven, pure and beautiful forever, and my dear, strong husband left to me on earth. A few weeks later her husband was taken sick, and after a long, suffering illness died. I suppose that must be a relief; but the poor woman was so worn down by the care of him, that she soon took to her bed and has never since been able to leave it. I do not think she can live long. It is distressing to see her; she lies gasping for breath, with three poor children hanging round her, to be left without parent, home or means; and saddest of all is poor Laura's patient, suffering face from which the light has all gone out. What

must it be for that sick mother to lie there all day and all night—and think!

She was more comfortable to-day, breathing easier and sitting up in bed propped by pillows, and was inclined to talk more than usual.

“I do not fear death for myself,” she said, “but the children—the children; oh, how can I leave the children!”

I tried to say something comforting; but I was choking, and my heart, too, cried out, ‘How can she leave them?’

“My oldest sister will take Hannah,” she went on to say; “she’s a strong, capable child, and will make her way in the world; and Tom can go to my uncle’s till a place is found for him; but poor Laura—who will be good to her? If she could only die with me and be laid in the same coffin, I could lie down in the grave in peace.”

What could I say? The poor thing had crept close to me and stood with her sightless eyes at my knee stroking my silk dress with her little hand. I lifted her to my lap,

but not caressingly, for she is not an interesting child, but a sickly, puny thing that only excites one's pity; and her voice is a sad, little wail. If God would take her to himself, how much better it would be! But God does not take puny, motherless children to himself; He leaves them to the compassion of human hearts.

"You have always been my best friend," said the suffering woman, "and I want you should advise me now. I can't die till I know what will become of Laura. Oh don't let her go to the poor-house; they wouldn't be good to her there!" she cried, in a voice shrill with pain.

"No, she shall not go there," I said, but without any clear idea how I could prevent it."

"She isn't hard to take care of; she only needs watching; but she is a shy, timid little thing. You are the only person she goes to; if any other neighbor comes in, she runs and hides; she likes your voice, I suppose."

I looked down at the child ; she laid her thin, little hand on my cheek, and in her sad, quavering tone said,—

“ Yes, I likes it.”

My tears dropped thick on the wan, upturned face.

“ Don’t ky, pretty lady, don’t ky—I won’t be naughty,” she whispered.

“ Just Bessie’s age—just Bessie’s age!” This kept repeating itself in my ears; yet I fairly started when Mrs. Beebe, fastening her eager, famishing eyes on me, said,—

“ She was born the same day your little Bessie was—the thirteenth of October.”

Yes, and what if Bessie were being left in the world blind, motherless, poor, with no heart to love and cherish her?

“ I promise you, Mrs. Beebe, she shall never want for care,” I said. “ I don’t know what can be done, but I will see she does not suffer.”

“ God bless you,” cried the dying woman, “ He will bless you,” and a peaceful smile rested on her face.

Many thoughts crowded on my brain as I walked home. I felt half guilty for having made the promise, but how could I have done otherwise? I hope I may find some kind-hearted woman who for love or money will take the child and be good to her; but I will certainly keep my word to that poor dying creature, and see that she is not neglected or abused.

After reaching home I could see nothing but poor Mary Beebe's dying eyes; and "just as old as Bessie" kept ringing in my ears. I told Graham about it when he came, keeping back nothing but a possibility that would thrust itself into my thoughts, but which I resolutely put down and meant to keep down. If she were a pleasing, attractive child, it would be so different, but my whole heart rose up against the thought of taking her into my own home; and yet the idea would recur again and again, and a soft voice kept pleading for her in my heart; but I was determined not to heed it; and I felt half angry when Graham, who

had been sitting silent for some time with his hand over his eyes, said,—

“Annie, has it ever occurred to you that we might take Laura Beebe?”

“How—in what way?” I asked, unamiably.

“I hardly know; perhaps it isn’t practicable; but it seems hard to have the poor child thrown on indiscriminate charity, and our house is so empty! She is just Bessie’s age, you know.”

“Yes, and if she were blind and you were dying, wouldn’t you want somebody to take her and be kind to her?” whispered the pleading voice.

“I couldn’t have anybody taking Bessie’s place,” I said aloud; “it isn’t to be thought of for a moment, Graham;—no, I never could!” I burst into sobs, and no more was said about it.

Still, the inward voice was not silenced. It is strange how things will come to us. Years before I had heard a celebrated preacher who, in speaking of our duties to the poor, after vividly depicting the miser-

able condition of a filthy, degraded outcast, had said, "You pass that poor creature by with scorn and loathing; but Gabriel, if he were permitted to, would joyfully fly from his bright seat in heaven to minister to her; but it is not Gabriel's work, it is yours, and you neglect it; you, forsooth, are too dainty to soil your fingers by touching work like that." I had not thought of these words for years; but now they sprang up in my mind as fresh and vivid as if just spoken, and to me. Yes, here was work. I wanted, or professed to want to work for my Master; here was an opportunity to do something for Him brought to my very door. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto *one of the least of these ye have done it unto me.*" Again and again during the following week, I heard that still, small voice, and again and again I hushed it.

"It would be preposterous, absurd," I said to myself, "nobody else would ever think of doing it, and why should I? If she came into the house, the care of her must come

on me; a three-year-old child, and blind besides, could not be left to servants; and what an undertaking it would be to bring up such a child as that! No, I never could do it, never!"

"Somebody must do it, or the child be left to suffer," said the pleading voice. "If Christ were on earth, He certainly would do something for her; He would pity her, speak gently to her, and give her sight. You can't do that, but you can be kind and tender to her."

Yes, I could. I went out that very afternoon to see several persons who I thought might be persuaded to take her by being paid, but without success; and it was with a heavy heart I turned down the little lane in which the Beebe's lived. The nurse told me Mrs. Beebe was sinking fast, and could not possibly survive the night. I stepped into the room for a moment, but, as she lay apparently unconscious, was about to come away, when she opened her eyes and fixed them on my face, struggling to speak. I

bent over her, but could only catch an inarticulate murmur. I gave her a little wine, and after swallowing it with difficulty, she revived a little and murmured,—

“Lau—ra—you will—”

“Take her? Yes, I will,” I said, moved by I know not what sudden, irresistible impulse.

The brightness and joy that came over that dying face, I shall never forget; new life seemed to pervade her whole frame; she almost lifted herself up, and in quite a distinct voice said,—

“Oh! God will bless you for it!—bless you!”

She fell back, her eyes still fixed on my face, while her own beamed with joy; but the breathing grew very short and faint, and in a few minutes all was over. I softly closed her eyelids, praying from my inmost soul that God would enable me to faithfully keep the pledge I had made to that departing spirit, now gone to be with Him in Paradise. By His grace helping me, I could do it, and I would.

Strange as it seems, from that moment my aversion to taking Laura went out of my heart. I felt, instead, glad that I had been permitted to cheer that poor woman's departing spirit; and if my pledge involved hardships and self-denial, as it certainly did, it would be done for "the least of these my brethren," and, therefore, for Christ himself. It seemed almost too wonderful, too glorious to be true, that I could do this *for Him*, and in this humble way become a co-worker with Him.

A warm glow was in my heart as I stepped lightly homeward over the frozen ground, meeting my husband just as he was coming in at the gate for his tea. When I told him what I had done, his face grew fairly radiant, and he folded me to his heart, saying,—

"You dear, blessed little wife, it is just what I expected of you!" and I believe we both cried—but not for sorrow.

Soon after tea Laura was brought in; the poor little, half-frozen thing was sadly fright-

ened and began to cry; but I took her in my arms and spoke soothingly to her, and the moment she heard my voice she put her hand up to my cheek with a soft, caressing touch, that went to my heart; and, cuddling down with a look of perfect contentment on her poor little wan face, was soon fast asleep. I clasped her to my heart, another God-given child to be loved and cherished. I made up the little crib which had never been taken from its place in the corner since Bessie left it; not with an aching heart, not grudgingly, but with an indescribable sense of peace and satisfaction.

As I looked at her thin, pinched face lying in soft slumber on the pillow where Bessie's used to lie, I seemed to see her mother's spirit bending over us both, in love and blessing; to see, too, my own sweet darling's face gazing at me with beaming eyes, and hear her whisper, "I am so glad—so glad, mamma!"

Yes, perhaps my angelic child did rejoice that I had taken that poor, forsaken waif

into my bosom and into her little crib—who can say? I know the thought lay soft and warm at my heart that night, and for many a day and night, and I do not think it harmed me. More touching still was the thought that the Father of the fatherless was surely there, shedding on us both His paternal benediction.

“God has given us another child to care for now,” I said to Graham, with tearful eyes.

“Yes, one He has himself sent.”

“I hope so,” I said, “and I don’t believe we shall ever be sorry!”

“I am sure we never shall, my precious little wife.”

And we talked of the peculiar trials her blindness would cause us, and of how different it would be from having our own Bessie to train. I did not shrink in dismay from these trials, for I was well and strong, and needed more to do than just to take care of my husband; and I felt that if wisdom and patience were only given to me to train her rightly, I would rejoice in the work, not murmur at it.

"I shall have to be a great deal more careful, to be forbearing and patient with her, for not having any mother-love in my heart," I said.

"I think Christ-love will be just as effectual," he said, smiling.

Graham's prayer that night was one I shall never forget ; it was such an uplifting, holy one ; so full of exultant joy and faith that it seemed as if the very air thrilled with the glory of the divine presence, and that we must put off our shoes, because the place where we stood was holy ground. Do angels, do redeemed spirits, indeed, come and bless us with the touch of unseen fingers ? That dead mother and Bessie seemed so near to me that night, their faces beaming with such radiant smiles, that I can almost think they do. Graham says he is sure this poor little child will be a new link to bind us closer to Christ ; that love to one of His creatures brings us into communion with all loving spirits, and most of all with Him whose name is Love. Yes, I trust He ap-

proves what we have done; and we will try to so train the child that one day we may bring her rejoicingly home—another glad spirit around His throne in heaven.

It thrilled me with tender, not painful emotion to hear again the soft breathing of a child by my side that night. Bessie needs my care and watching no longer, but little Laura does, and she shall have the tenderest cherishing I can give her.

She slept all night, waking about daylight with a pitiful little wail, instead of the joyful outcry of my own baby; but there was a tender appeal to my sympathy in the wail, and still more in the confiding touch of her soft little hand. Poor thing! the daylight and the darkness were all alike to her, but I soothed her to sleep, and we had finished breakfast before she again woke.

I tenderly washed and dressed her—in Bessie's own little garments, for I had no other ready—there was a sharp pain in my heart as I once more tied the little strings and buttoned the buttons, but the joy over-

laid the pain, and when she was dressed she looked so sweet and clean, and had such a peaceful smile on her thin face, I wondered I had ever thought her plain. There is nothing in the look of her eyes to show their blindness, only a careful observer would notice a little droop of the eyelid, and that something, perhaps, was wanting in expression; but the general impression one gets is only of very soft, dark blue eyes. She is a very clinging child; and over and over, when I was dressing her, she said,—

“I loves you—I loves you, I do!”

“And I love you, my dear,” I said; and was glad I could say it truthfully.

Such a lovely expression lighted up her face when I said this, kissing her for the first time, that my whole heart went out to her. She was, indeed, with this sensitive nature, the last child to be thrown on the charity of strangers or taken to the poor-house. No wonder her poor mother could not die in peace till she was sure some one would be “kind to Laura.”

When I put her down, she ran across the room, and feeling all about the bed carefully, said, "Where am I? and where's my mamma?"

I took her again in my arms, and folding her to my bosom, I said, gently,—

"Your mamma has gone away to live with the beautiful angels in heaven."

She turned her sightless eyes imploringly to my face, "Won't she come back again—I want my mamma," she said, with a piercing cry.

"You will some day go and live with her among the beautiful angels," I said.

"I want my mamma—I want her *now*!"

And she sobbed till her whole frame shook, not noisily as most children do, but with suppressed low sobs, twice as hard to bear. I let her grief have vent, thinking it was best so; she evidently comprehended the true state of things, far more clearly than most children of her age would, and I did not choose to deceive her.

When she became a little quiet, I set her

down and, opening my piano, played a low, sweet strain; she listened, as if entranced, while a soft light stole over her face. I was rejoiced to see that she had the passion for music so often given to the blind, apparently as a compensation for their loss of sight. She came to the piano and, passing her hand softly over the keys, said, "pretty—pretty!"

I gave her some toys—Bessie's toys—feeling that they were hallowed, not desecrated, by such a use, and she amused herself with them for hours, never speaking a word. If I saw another childish figure there, another dimpled hand, it did not pain me; if my own darling were near—and she had never seemed so near since she went away—I knew the angel spirit would rejoice to see how happy the earth-child was made.

Laura has now been with us over two months, and is a perfect picture of quiet happiness, gliding noiselessly about the

house, never making a mis-step or losing her way; besides being clothed and fed, she needs very little care, and it is perfectly astonishing how little trouble she makes me. Her mother spoke truly when she said she would not be a troublesome child. I suppose she was thrown so entirely on herself during her mother's illness that she learned to amuse herself; and, instead of being unhappy, she seems a wonderfully happy child; only not in a noisy, boisterous way, for she seldom makes a sound. Her greatest treat is music from the piano; and the greatest punishment I can inflict, if she has been naughty, is not to play a few tunes for her before she goes to bed, as I am in the habit of doing; but she seldom is naughty, not half so often as Bessie was, partly because she has less animal spirits; but she has also a much better disposition, is more affectionate and anxious to please us. Now that she has suitable food and care, her face and little body are getting really plump, and I think she would be called a nice-looking

child by any one. But she is painfully shy of strangers, and can rarely be persuaded to speak to any one out of the family.

Miss Patty Train made me a call yesterday, stopping on her way to the prayer-meeting.

"Well, it doos beat all," she said, "your takin' that are blind gal of Beeby's to bring up. I don't say 'tain't all right, but it's curis how you ever come to think o' such a thing. I told Miss Stone, says I, I guess 'twas cause she's just the same age as Betsy. 'I think 'twas foolish if she was,' says she. 'If I'd bin goin' to take a child at all, I'd took one that was come of decent folks,' says she."

We had thought of that matter of ancestry before; it had troubled me, I own, but Graham settled it by saying,—

"She's the child of a saint in glory, and that is a good family enough for me."

So it should be for me, then, who had no Kingston blood in my veins. I was tempted to tell Miss Patty that, but I said, instead,—

"I hope she will grow up a good and useful woman."

"I guess she will, Miss Kingston; she hain't got a mite of Beeby in her; she's Temple all over. Miss Beeby was a Temple, and as good a woman as ever lived."

"Yes," I said; "she is one of those who 'will wear the white robes, having come out of much tribulation.'"

"It's curis now what a difference there is in folks," said Miss Patty, "some folks wouldn't touch such a child more'n they would a toad, but I don't believe 'twill sile your fingers any; and doin' good to somebody kind o' takes the soreness out o' a body's heart when the Lord has bruised it."

Miss Patty is right; it does take the soreness out. Miss Patty is getting to be quite cheerful, too; she did not croak once while she was here, nor utter one dismal prophecy; to be sure, she advised me to take "a little seeny and rhubub to keep off the janders now warm weather is comin' on," but

fortunately, I am not obliged to follow her prescription.

Aunt Katharine is greatly rejoiced that we have taken Laura; she, too, thinks it is the best thing for a stricken heart to be helping others. She advises our taking her to the city to be examined by some experienced oculist, that we may be sure with regard to her eyes; we had intended to do so, and shall go as soon as Graham can find leisure. He is very fond of Laura and inexpressibly tender to her; they never romp together after the old fashion, but she watches quite as eagerly for his home-coming; her quick ear detects his approach far sooner than my eyes, and she trips down the steps like a little fairy, to be brought back triumphantly in his arms, her face all in a glow of ecstasy. I never saw a child's face express so much as hers; the eyes do not change, but every feature fairly gleams when she is pleased, and to see her when I am playing on the piano is a study for an artist; she stands with her head bent a little

forward, eagerly drinking in every sound, her face changing with every changing strain. No one could live with her and not become attached to her; her very infirmity interests you, and is an added claim on your love and kindness; but I fear she is of too sensitive a temperament to get on well in our rough world, and we must try to educate her wisely in this respect.

We have taken Laura to Dr. W——, he says the optic nerve is paralyzed, and there is no possible cure for that. No, the poor child can never see. I have shed a great many tears over it; I did not know till he gave us his decision how much I had hoped for a different one. But perhaps the dear child may be as happy as other children, though in a very different way; one thing I am sure of, while either Graham or I live, she will have the tenderest love and cherishing. I can so well understand now how

her poor mother could not die in peace till she knew some one would be kind to her poor helpless orphan. The dear child will see in heaven;—it is a comfort to know that!

We stopped to see Aunt Katharine on our way home, who was just as good and lovely as ever. She opened her great heart to take in our little waif at once, and said she almost envied me the training of such a child, and that if she were a little younger she would try to find some poor stray to adopt herself. She had the training of two orphan nieces, who now are the brightness and charm of her life, she says. I urged her coming home with us, but she seemed to prefer her own home during the hot weather.

My little blind child is dearer than ever, now I know she is doomed to perpetual darkness; we must try to let all the sunlight possible into her soul, that within there may be light in spite of the surrounding darkness. They tell me the blind are usually

cheerful, and so far Laura certainly has been ; but oh ! it is a sad thing to be in such a fair, bright world as this and see nothing of its beauty !

CHAPTER VIII.

A WHOLE year has passed since I have written here, and the Spring loveliness is again brightening on the earth. The year brought few outward changes, but we have had enough to occupy our thoughts; Laura has thriven beyond all expectation, and is now a plump and perfectly healthy child, happy as a bird, singing about the house from morning till night: Graham's name for her is "Singing Birdie," and she deserves it, having a marvellously sweet voice for a child so young.

It is curious to watch the development of her faculties, so different, in many respects, from that of other children. She passes her hand carefully over every new object, and, by some mysterious instinct, seems in that way to get an accurate idea

of it. She calls this *seeing*. Her likes and dislikes are very strong, particularly for persons, whom she judges of by their voices. She is delighted by some and repelled by others. When the tones are true and kind, she calls it *pretty*; or if harsh, or in any way disagreeable, she shrugs her shoulders and says, "Ugly—ugly."

The other day a little girl of her own age came with her mother to spend the day. She felt carefully of her face, her hands, her dress, even to the ends of her little shoes, and then came running to me—'Pretty girl—pretty girl, Auntie, I see her all;' and at once established an intimacy with her. If the investigation had not been satisfactory, nothing would have induced her to go near her again.

Her fondness for flowers, and delight in them, is extraordinary. Without seeing one of their beautiful tints, she gets rare enjoyment from them—from their fragrance, I suppose—though I sometimes think she hears their gentle swaying in the breeze.

"She sings—she sings," she will sometimes say of a lily or a rose, and her quick ear catches every out-of-door sound. The murmur of insects, the twitter of birds, the rustle of leaves, the sighing of the wind, the tinkle of rain-drops, all fill her with delight.

It really does seem to us that she is happier than ordinary children, so good is God to those we are apt to think hardly dealt with. She has had but one illness; but that being a severe one, I was a good deal alarmed for a few days. It showed us how dear she had become to us; for it would, indeed, have been hard to give her up. She lavishes so much affection on us, that we cannot help repaying her in her own coin. Yes, she has a large place in our hearts—not Bessie's place, but her own—and a very tender one it is. She always calls Graham Papa and me Auntie, having taken both up of herself. We do not interfere with the fancy, as it will correct itself when she grows older.

What a mistake we should have made if we had not taken this warm-hearted, sensitive little child to our bosoms ! How little I knew what a treasure the Lord was offering me when I wanted to thrust her away ! What if I had ? What if she had gone to the poor-house, the dear, shrinking, tender-hearted little thing ? It makes me shudder to think of it ? If I have done something for her, she has done much more for me ; wakening a new fountain of tenderness in my heart—not the same I felt for my own darling child, but a very sweet and precious one ; and my heart would be sadly vacant without her now ; and Graham is even fonder of her than I.

Graham is gone a great deal, and, I fear, is overworking himself, for he has had several ill turns—a new thing for him ; but he makes very light of it.

A new sorrow has come with these lovely Spring days ; Aunt Katharine has gone

"home." She died very suddenly of heart disease, and we have just come from the funeral. She looked most beautiful in her coffin, with her clear-cut, classic features lying in that soft repose, and a sweet smile resting on them. Dear Aunt Katharine! I loved her very tenderly, and looked to her for advice and counsel; but it would be selfish to weep, because she has gone to that home she so loved and yearned for.

I never knew any one take such cheerful views of death as Graham.

"There can be no death," he says, "to a Christian. It is only intenser, more glorious life—a life where our capacity for everything great and noble will continually enlarge and be filled; where everything that is best in us will be expanded beyond and above all we have ever dreamed of. Aunt Katharine is not dead! I cannot conceive of such a noble spirit as her's going out. Dead? She is just beginning to live in the best sense; and is that a thing to mourn over, Annie?"

“No,” I said ; “ but there is another side to be looked at. If it is life and glory to those who go, it is loneliness and desolation to those who stay behind.”

I thought, what if Graham and I should ever be separated ! Perhaps he thought of it, too ; for he said, very tenderly :

“ So it is, darling, so it is, unless Christ comes in and fills the vacancy. But don’t you suppose He will, or would, if we would let Him ? ‘ I will come unto you,’ He said to the Twelve, when they were going to lose a friend ; as if that was enough. Yes, Annie, I really believe if, instead of shutting ourselves into our sorrows and keeping all the light of heaven out of our souls, we opened them to receive Him, Christ would so come to us that the season of our deepest grief and anguish would become one of the richest and most precious of our whole lives. I believe it is literally true, ‘ that earth hath no sorrow which heaven cannot heal.’ ”

“ But, oh, Graham ! ” I cried, “ how can we help mourning ? It may be selfish ; but

if a piece of our very hearts is torn away, it must bleed, and we must feel the agony. Say what you will, we must feel it; and I believe it was meant we should. Christ Himself wept when Lazarus died; and I'm sure he didn't blame Martha and Mary for grieving bitterly. He sympathized in their grief, and went to the grave with them."

"Yes, He sympathized most tenderly, and went to the grave; but it was to bring their brother to life. And is not that just what He will do now? He will go to the grave with us as tenderly as He went with them, and will raise our dead for us, saying, 'Whosoever believeth on me shall never die.' I think, too, He turns and asks us the same question He asked Martha — 'Believest thou this?' *Do* we believe it, or do we still cling to our friends as dead? If we believe it, surely it will do much to turn our grief into joy."

"But we want the bodily presence of our friends," I said. "We want to see them, to hear and touch them. Believing in their

spiritual existence does not satisfy us. While we are in the body, we crave more, and can't help doing it."

"Yes, we do crave the visible presence, and can't help grieving for its loss. I don't mean to say there is no sorrow when a friend goes out from our sight—there is, and must be; but I think genuine faith lifts us above the bitterness of grief; and that a sense of Christ's living presence takes away all unbearable loneliness, even when we are most alone. In our darkest hours, to know that our lost friend is still living, still loving us, still ours, in the highest and best sense, must be unspeakably consoling. When Christ was to be no more visible with His disciples, He said to them: 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you;' as if the removal of the bodily presence was necessary to their receiving the higher revelation of the spiritual one. May not this be true of our friends—may there not be a closer nearness after death, a communion

of spirit with spirit more precious and inspiring than even the old bodily one?"

"That is what the spiritualists claim," I said.

"No; they claim much more. They claim that the spirits of the departed take material shape and appear to the senses. My idea is that they may touch our souls silently, even as the Holy Spirit of God does, not by any outward sign or sound, but by an inspiring, strengthening, quickening influence, of which we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth—an unseen, noiseless message sent by God to cheer and comfort us. That is very different from one that is rapped up by a medium. I have often felt, or thought I felt, my mother's presence in this way; and the touch of her spirit on my spirit has thrilled me as no earthly touch could; and perhaps this invisible presence has done as much for me as her bodily one could—it may be even more."

"I know what you mean," I said, softly. "I don't remember my mother, but I idol-

ized my father, who lived till I was almost twenty, and he often seems very near. I felt this particularly the day we were married. I felt almost sure he was close by me then, sympathizing and approving. And, oh! it was such a comfort to believe this; and I don't think it did me any harm, even it was only a fancy. It was a tender, hallowed delight I felt, for which I could heartily thank God. Dear little Bessie, too, often seems very near, the darling! I wonder if they *are* here—I never quite dare believe they are. I think the Bible would have told us, if it were so."

"There is nothing in the Bible to contradict it, so far as I know," said Graham. "It certainly shows us that the angels are deeply interested in our affairs, and very ready to come and help us whenever they are needed; and we can hardly believe the spirits, who once shared all our earthly experiences, can be less interested in us than they are, or less willing to aid us. 'Are they not *all* ministering spirits sent forth

to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' It does not strike me as at all at variance with the Scriptural representations, to suppose that our friends, after they have gone from our sight, may be sent back unseen messengers to minister to our spiritual progress."

"I am sure they must want to come and help us," I said.

"Yes, they must. If you were to go first, Annie, you would be glad to come back and minister to me, I know."

"Certainly I should, if I might; and so would you."

"Yes, dear; and I see no reason why it may not be permitted; but we know too little of that life to feel quite certain about it. It is a thing to be felt rather than reasoned about. Still, if this consciousness of their nearness is felt in our most hallowed moments—if it deepens our holiest convictions and draws us closer to God and heaven—I don't know why we need fear to accept it as a truth."

"It would certainly make our life a far richer one," I said.

"Yes; and this communion may be a dim foreshadowing of that fuller communion of spirits to which we look forward in heaven."

"But isn't there danger of its lowering our conception of heaven?" I asked. "Should we not think of that as the place for entire and perfect communion with God Himself rather than for the enjoyment of earthly friendships?"

"It is a false idea that the two conflict. I believe a pure earthly friendship leads us to God, not away from Him; and that loving and ministering to friends in heaven would not lessen, but intensify, the fulness of our communion with Him. We have no right to think of God as an isolated being, wrapt up in the contemplation of His own perfections, withdrawn from His children for perpetual worship; for such is not the Bible representation of Him. '*Christ*,' as one finely says, '*is the mind of God expressing*

itself;' and who was ever so considerate of others as Christ, so entirely devoted to serving them? Doubtless the spirits in heaven that are fullest of adoration are fullest of activity also, and are going somewhere on errands of love and mercy. Why not sometimes to those they love best here?"

"You have no doubt they do still love us?" I asked.

"With Christ, and like Christ, and *not* love our friends!' as Aunt Katharine would say. Impossible! when He loves them so tenderly. No, Annie; going into the fuller presence of Him whose very name is 'Love,' can never make our hearts less loving. Never fear that; you might as well expect to get chilled by going into the sunshine."

"Of course we shall be more loving there," I said; "I do not doubt that; but perhaps we may find new objects to love, something better than the old earthly scenes and friends."

"Very likely," said Graham; "but I don't

imagine the new love will cast out the old. If God and Christ showed no interest in us, we might think our friends would lose theirs ; but I can't believe those who once loved us here are the only beings in heaven who are now indifferent to us. Or, if our love belonged only to our bodies, we might expect it to die with the body ; but it is a part of our very souls, and must live while they live. Why, Annie, next to my love for Christ, my love for you is the most vital part of my being. Do you suppose God gave it to me to last only for a few short years, and then die out ? My soul, without that, wouldn't be *my* soul, but a very different one. If you take out all the affections and memory, the soul would be entirely changed ; and everywhere the Bible, directly or by implication, teaches that we are to carry our individual characters with us, and makes that a reason for our perfecting them here. The same traits must exist ; only the good in us will be constantly strengthening and expanding. There may

be a love, or what is falsely called such, that will die with the body; but not true, genuine love like ours, dearest."

We sat silent for a little while, thinking. Graham was the first to break the silence.

"If I were to leave you for a little while, Annie, you wouldn't doubt I was loving you still?"

"No, I think I shouldn't; but"—I could not go on. "If he ever should leave me!"

"Our love is so much a part of our very life," he said, "and all true life must be so much more intense there, that I feel sure all that is best in it will last and strengthen, and that I shall love you then infinitely more, with a pure and more exalted affection, to be sure, but one to which any earthly love is poor indeed. Why, to ask if our love shall be as great there as here is like asking if the ocean holds as much water as a baby tea-cup! One of the most precious things to me about our marriage, Annie, was that God had given us to one another forever, and bound us by a tie that

nothing could sever ; a tie, not to end at the grave, but which, purified and hallowed, should endure throughout our whole existence."

"But Christ said, "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage," I said.

"Yes ; but he was speaking to those who took the low, Eastern view of marriage, regarding it as a mere bodily union ; and he told them that no *such* marriage should be in the resurrection—all that belongs to the senses shall be done away, but all the pure, spiritual, sacred part shall exist—all that union of mind and soul which make two one in every true marriage. This seems to me the natural rendering of this passage ; as if Christ said, 'No such marriage as you who have asked me this question are thinking of—marriage, in the low, sensual use of the word—will exist in the resurrection, but you shall be spiritualized beings there, like the angels of God !' It seems to me that the Bible makes marriage a much more

sacred thing than we are inclined to. It compares the union of husband and wife to that between Christ and His Church—one of the closest and most sacred of all unions—and speaks of them as what *God* hath joined together; and, to my mind, it would sadly degrade marriage to limit it to this short life. In the larger range and more loving atmosphere of heaven, it must become something unspeakably tender and true! Even here, hearts grow into a marvellous oneness in the course of a life-time. Why, Annie, if we live to our golden wedding, we shall have so grown together, a separation would be well nigh impossible!"

Our golden wedding! There is something very tender and sweet in the thought; sweeter yet is the thought of the eternal union. We certainly have become more and more one every year since our marriage. At first, we puzzled and worried each other, as, I suppose, all young couples do, more or less; but now we fully understand each other. A great sorrow, too, brings hearts

very near together. Yes, if we were to live on together forty years longer we should become very much one in spirit, as Graham says.

But whenever one is taken, I trust the other will not be long left behind. I told Graham so, and he said, with his sweet smile, "That must be as God pleases, darling."

His faith is so much stronger than mine, that he seems never to fear anything; and when I told him how the dread that I might be left sometimes haunted me, he soothed me by many sweet words of love and faith, telling me if I ever were left desolate, the Comforter would surely come; and reminding me how, when Bessie was taken, just the strength I needed was given me.

Yes, I must trust. I would not direct when or how either of us should be taken. It would be a sore, sore thing to be left behind; but I do not feel like saying, "I could not have it so—I could not bear it," as I did about Bessie. I never can doubt Christ

again ; He was so merciful to me when Bessie died. And perhaps heaven may not be so far away as we fancy ; and that, if our eyes were not holden, we should see angels ascending and descending, and blessed spirits thronging all about us.

What a thing it would make of life to believe this ; to be always walking amidst a cloud of unseen witnesses ! How softly we should step ! But we know the Great Spirit is always near ; and shall we not walk still more softly before Him ?

Yes, we are on hallowed ground wherever we tread, and what manner of persons, therefore, ought we to be !

Dear Aunt Katharine's kindness has outlived her earthly presence, and she has left to me—only think of it, to *me*—all she had ; not a large fortune, but a large addition to our former means. We had all that was really necessary before. but certain enjoy-

ments, perhaps I should call them luxuries, are now at our command; for example, traveling a little. We have never felt able to take a journey; and, of course, our souls have longed for the White Mountains and Niagara; and this year, Graham thinks we can go to both, leaving little Laura at her Aunt's, who will board her. Hard as a separation of a few weeks from her will be she will be kindly cared for there, and no real harm can come to her.

Long, long will October, 18—, be remembered by us; for never before, I verily believe, did two mortal beings crowd so much intense enjoyment into three short weeks as we have—three weeks being the longest time Graham could be away from his business.

Those “everlasting hills!” How our souls seemed to expand, and go outward and upward, as we gazed on their grand

outlines ; with what awe and reverence we stood beneath their mysterious shadows, gazing at them,

“Till the dilating soul, enwrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing—there
As in her natural form swelled vast to heaven.”

I think I never worshipped as I worshipped there, with such lowly prostration of spirit, such an uplifting and ennobling sense of God's majesty, power and glory. And to think that this God, so glorious in strength, so wonderful in working is *our* God !

I could have stayed among those grand old mountains forever,

“And sat, and sung myself away
To everlasting bliss.”

But we had to leave them in ten days ; though, in a sense, I brought them away with me ; and they are, and always must be, a part of my very being ; a possession

which no sorrow, or suffering, or change in the future can ever take away from me.

I told Graham I could better understand now why he thought a knowledge of God's works would form a part of the joy of heaven, so directly do such grand scenes lead us up to God in purer adoration—that is, when the soul is attuned to such surroundings. We saw gay, chattering, indifferent people, who evidently were thinking more of themselves than the scenery; and what a profanation it seemed in such a place, and how I pitied them! Not to think high thoughts in such high places argues poverty of soul indeed.

Niagara, too, was wonderful and magnificent, but had not for me the same enchantment as the mountains. Besides these grand points, how many lovely meadows, sparkling streams, blooming villages, and picturesque hill-sides, glowing with the autumnal radiance, have we beheld! And now that we are at home once more, that, too, looks most beautiful and charming. Little Laura

is well, and so overjoyed to have us back again, that she cannot sing enough, or, in any way, sufficiently manifest her ecstasy. Oh! how full of beauty and joy the whole world is!

So many different kinds of enjoyment, too. I do not know as anything in my whole journey gave me a more exquisite thrill of delight than our meeting with Laura, and her raptures over us on our return.

The other night, we were trying to sum up all we had enjoyed.

"And only to think, Graham, "I said, that money can bring all this—that a few dollars and cents has given us all this wealth of vision and these glorious memories!"

"Money didn't give it," he said. "That girl, who sat adjusting the feather in her hat in the most splendid spot for a view in all the mountains, didn't get it. She saw exactly what she would at home, herself and her clothes, and she paid just as much money as we did."

"The investment brought better returns in our case than her's, I admit," I said laughing. "But then we couldn't have had the mountains without the money.

"No, we couldn't. Money is good as a means; but alone, it doesn't amount to much. But I see the little wife is getting quite set up by her new wealth; I fear it's going to turn her head entirely. See how she gives herself airs, and plans for flower-gardens and conservatories, and I don't know what other extravagances!"

"Yes," I said; "she can hardly sleep for planning. She's ambitious to go to Europe, now; and was just thinking, if a few hundred dollars would buy Mount Blanc, what a capital bargain it would be!"

Holding up his hands, in pretended horror, he exclaimed, "Well! after Europe, what?"

"A little trip to Palestine, if you please; and then——"

What then, I don't know, for a poor widow woman, with five small children

came in and set me to thinking how little some people have to enjoy in this world, while others have so much !

We have many serious talks about the best investment for our little fortune. It shall not all go to increase our pleasures, that we are determined on. We shall not revel in ease and luxury without considering those who have scarcely bread to eat, and who are our own brothers and sisters—children of the same great Father.

Sometimes I feel that pretty much all ought to go to them ; it certainly is a trust-fund ; both Graham and I so regard it.

It touched my heart inexpressibly that Aunt Katharine should have shown such trust in me ; and I do not want the gift should “bring a snare” or burden my heart ; I want it should make me grateful, loving, and compassionate toward every suffering human being within my reach. I desire to spend every cent of it as I think Christ would wish me to. Some enjoyments, like our journey, I believe it is right to have ;

and it is pleasant to feel able to give Laura a thorough musical education, and to know she will be provided for, if she outlives us; but we will not forget the poor—we want our heaven to be beginning on earth; to be even here, “with Christ and like Christ,” in lowly ministries of love to all whom we have power to bless.

CHAPTER IX.

NEARLY ten years have passed since I wrote here last ;—years of change, of bitter agony and pain, of unutterable peace and joy. That I should live to write myself a widow and speak of peace and joy in the same breath ! Yes, alone in the world, with all I loved best gone from my sight, I am truly peaceful, yea more, I am truly happy. Yet with what a different happiness from that I once enjoyed !

I cannot dwell on these years—cannot voluntarily summon back the pain. My husband, my pride and strength, on whose manly breast I leaned without a fear, who was all a husband possibly could be—brave, pure, large-hearted, conscientious, consider-

ate and tender, whom I passionately loved, if not idolized, was taken from me, not suddenly, but by a slow, lingering illness which mercifully prepared us for the separation. The terrible alternations of hope and despair, of rebellious struggling against what I saw God was going to do, and of submission to His will—all these my dear husband helped me to pass through, bearing me up on the wings of his own strong faith, till I, too, could look on death as a more glorious life, and something to be desired rather than dreaded. When I could not only believe but *feel* this, I saw how utterly selfish it was to wish to keep him here, and I prayed day and night that I might love him better than myself.

When I found, too, that if prolonged, his life must be one of physical suffering, I could not desire that for my sake he should endure it; no, I loved him too truly for that.

The first weeks after I knew that his disease was incurable, were weeks of the sorest agony; to know he could be happy away

from me, even in heaven, was itself bitterness—that a time would come when I should be powerless to soothe or aid him, or even to know where he was or what he was doing—the very thought of it was unendurable anguish; but it was a selfish anguish, and in time God lifted me above it. At first, any allusion to our separation completely overpowered me; but when I saw how this pained him, and how he wished to talk as frankly on this as we had on all other subjects, I made a great effort to overcome all agitation, and succeeded so well, that we at length talked of his dying as calmly as if he were going away on any other journey. It has since been an unspeakable satisfaction to me that we could; that I could go hand-in-hand with him to the very brink of the river, sharing every thought and feeling.

He had peaceful intervals, when, for days, or even weeks, he was almost well in appearance, entirely his own self so far as clearness and activity of mind were concerned, though he was not strong enough

for professional work, and so we had leisure for long talks on all that was dearest to our hearts, and those blessed communings were by far the most precious of our whole life; for he was always cheerful, looking forward to the future with a faith undimmed by a single doubt or fear. These intervals would be succeeded by paroxysms of intense suffering—yielding to remedies—but, as we both knew, sure to come back again, and finally to end the precious life so dear to me.

I often wondered that he had no doubts about his future; indeed I was sometimes half troubled by it. I told him so, for we kept back nothing from each other—and that was such a blessed thing—he lay and thought awhile before replying.

“It would be presumptuous,” he said, “if my hope rested on anything I had done, but it rests wholly on Christ’s promises—it can’t be wrong to believe what He has said. He has promised to save all who come to Him—all who believe on Him. The passages are almost numberless in which He

promises this. I know I can only reach heaven as a pardoned sinner; but, Annie, Christ came to save sinners—that is His great work, the thing He lived and died and ascended to heaven for, and it can't honor Him to doubt whether or not He will accomplish it! 'He that cometh to me *shall* be saved.' 'He that hath me *hath* eternal life.' Why should I have a doubt, dear?"

"Can we be positively certain our faith is of the right kind," I asked, "that we really have come to Him aright?"

"I must use my reason and common sense in this, Annie, as in other matters. Faith is made the condition of salvation, for faith unites us to Christ and makes Him real and personal to us. So far as I can judge, I have thus believed in Him, sincerely consecrating myself to His service and desiring to be His obedient child.

"And," he added, "He has revealed himself so clearly to me, in the very depths of my being, as my helper, my guide, my redeemer; so perfectly does my experience

confirm the written word, that I can no more doubt it than I can doubt my own existence."

At another time he said,—

"When I look only at myself—my impurity, my selfishness, my want of conformity to God's perfect law of love; at all my sins of deed, word and thought, I am overwhelmed, I cry 'unclean—unclean.' I cannot endure it—but shall I therefore despair? 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief.' This is my hope and comfort; if I were to live fifty years longer, I have no idea I should be any more fitted to enter heaven; it must always be that I shall be carried in by the Good Shepherd a poor, torn, defiled wanderer, whom He has rescued by His mighty power—I want to let Him carry me in—I want to lie close to His breast without one fear."

I felt that he was right; that but for the imperfection of my faith, my vision would be equally clear and elevating.

"Darling," he added—he almost always called me darling in those days—"when I am gone, you musn't let any shadow of unbelief keep you from entering fully into the joy God offers his children; you must open your heart and let the King of Glory in; you will, I know; you will be comforted by the great Comforter; He will teach you *all* things; and oh! what blessed things He can teach! I can't bear to think of you as living a sorrowful life here, while I am rejoicing; I think it will sadden me if you do, darling—sadden me, even in heaven."

"If we could only go together," I murmured.

"It would be delightful; but if God has something more for you to do here, and will strengthen you to do it, you will not be unwilling to stay, Annie? It will only be a little while at the longest, only a little while, and then eternity together!"

Often, very often, I craved assurances that he would still love me; and often, very often, he gave them.

"It cannot be," he would say, "that I shall be changed into somebody else, then, or lose all that constitutes the *me*; I must be Graham Kingston still, in all but the outside garment, which will be laid aside, because no longer needed; my love for you is a part of my very being, and it must last while my being lasts, only purified from whatever has been low or earthly. In all these years, next to my love to God, it has been the purest affection of my soul, and if anything survives death, that must."

"And if you can come and help me, you will," I said.

"Surely, I will; you cannot doubt it, dear."

"But you will have progressed so far beyond me," I said, "will be so much purer and holier than I, that that alone will separate us. You will be sinless, and I shall always be doing wrong."

"I think that is a wrong conception of holiness," he said, "the holier one is the more forbearing and loving he is; the more

tender and patient and anxious to help others in every way. Think how forbearing and loving Christ is when we do wrong; and there, we are to be like Him, you know."

At one time and another we spoke of almost everything in connection with my future, as well as his, for he seemed to long to shield me as far as possible from all care and suffering. Of course, I should always keep Laura with me, and we both felt that she would prove a dear little companion and comforter. My surest safeguard against grief, we both knew, would be in active occupation, and in going out of myself for others, in some form; and we planned ways for my doing this; but much had to be left for circumstances to decide. It was settled that I should ask Mary Sterling to come and live with me; she had no home; we both loved her like a sister, and her affection for Graham was so great it would be a bond of union, all the stronger after he was gone.

“Yes, activity, occupation, is the great secret of worthy and contented living,” he said, one day, “and I can’t imagine who first conceived the idea of heaven as a place for standing still in; some poor, tired soul, probably, to whom mere rest was the highest ideal of bliss; but the glowing descriptions of the Bible never convey any such idea—there, every word seems to quiver with an intensity of life and glory. When I heard Handel’s “Messiah,” I got a new conception of what music and worship might be in the next world; as that great volume of harmony rolled out in grander and grander surges, my spirit, rapt and trembling, seemed to float upward in an ecstasy of love and praise and worship. All the littleness of self was lost; my whole being seemed kindled, melted, fused into the infinite—upborne to the very throne of God, and yet cast down in the depth of self-abasement and humility. Oh! it was rapture, ecstasy, unutterable, indescribable! I have always hoped you and I, darling,

might hear it together some day; but we shall hear it more gloriously rendered in heaven. Whatever the art of a Handel or Mozart, an Angelo or a Raphael may have accomplished on earth, must be but the mere germ of what will be developed there; for God created the mind of a Handel and a Raphael, and has Himself all the resources from which art, purified and developed, shall draw throughout all eternity—Himself being the great inspiration and rewarder!"

He lay silent a moment, and said,—

"Don't be troubled, dear, that I wander off into these speculations; I never forget that Christ is the centre and source, the life and glory of all; and that to be without one spot or stain of sin, to be pure as He is pure, holy as He is holy, is the crowning joy and glory of heaven. I long for intellectual expansion but still more do I yearn for the spiritual unfolding into Christ's own image of infinite love and purity, which I hope for there. As you say, our spiritual nature is our highest, and its perfection far

more to be coveted than that of the merely intellectual; but I believe it is the union and harmony of the two which constitutes the fullest perfection in that higher life. We are made both rational and spiritual beings, with capacities for indefinite expansion in both lives—in all lives.

“Whatever pursuit or taste is elevating and pure, a blessing to ourselves and others, we cannot doubt will be enlarged and perfected there; and oh, to what wonderful, glorious heights a whole eternity will bring us! If the attainments of some even here seem marvellous, what shall we behold there! It is this wonderful capacity for development which makes a human soul worth so much. When a man with all these glorious possibilities before him persists in yielding to his lower propensities, and degrading himself by self-indulgence and sin, he ruins not only what he is, but what he might be—endless ages hence. His soul clogged, imbruted, narrowed down to low aims, cannot rise to a glorious immortality

he has kept himself away from it. If there were no revelation of future evil to such a soul, we should see how inevitable its ruin was."

In those days we felt greatly distressed for a young man who, by nature bright and promising, had become profligate, and so vilely intemperate as to be really imbruted in both body and soul. Graham had labored with him incessantly, taking him into his own office at one time, in the hope of rescuing him, and by love and patient watching had borne with him month after month, till finally, just as Graham was lying on the border-land, peacefully waiting for his summons, he was killed in a drunken brawl. It was very painful—very hard to bear. To think of what he might have been, and of what he was!

"We dare not follow him into the future," said Graham, "his spirit has gone to God who gave it, and there we must leave him."

Yes, there we must leave him; but one text kept ringing in my ear—"he hath gone

to his own place ;” and I dared not ask myself, “ was that among the pure and holy ones ? ”

It is so comforting to know that an infinitely wise and holy and loving God is to judge us—He who knows all our temptations, all our surroundings, all the inmost secrets of our lives, and can do nothing wrong ! Yes, we must leave the poor, misguided, sinning ones in His hands ; we could not wish to leave them anywhere else, nor to take upon ourselves the prerogative of judging them.

But my beloved one was not a wreck ; he had not turned away from the call to be Christ’s disciple but, yielding to the Holy Spirit’s influence, he had been led, step by step, till here he now lay, waiting for the voice that should say, “ Come up higher.” Before him opened out indescribable, inconceivable light and progress ; ineffable joy and glory ! There were moments when, lifted out of self, I could heartily give God thanks for this, not repining that I was to

“a little longer wait” to be disciplined and chastened and made meet for the Master’s coming. But alas! there were other moments when my faith was weak and my poor heart sorely oppressed by his sufferings. Why was it necessary he should endure so much physical pain?—it surely was not needed to prepare him for heaven; and those racking tortures were not preparing him, so far as I could see; the whole subject of physical pain was a mystery to me; was it a direct infliction from God, or caused by the neglect or violation of some physical law? It greatly distressed me; but Graham was never disturbed by it for a moment.

“‘The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?’” he asked, with a smile illuminating his whole face; “whatever the cause is, some good is to be the result. I never doubt that for an instant; we do not see what it is, but haven’t we faith enough in our dear Lord to trust Him without seeing? I think He likes that kind of trust, Annie.”

At another time he said, after a spasm of pain,—

“He helps me bear it—I feel Him so near at such times, it is worth suffering for; it is not so hard to bear; not so fearful as you think, *with Him near*; nothing is hard then.”

He liked me to read hymns to him in those days—especially one of Miss Waring’s he wanted me to repeat over and over; “it always rests me,” he would say.

“Go not far from me, O my Strength,
The light of all my day;
Take from me anything Thou wilt,
But go not Thou away—
Then let the storm that does Thy work,
Deal with me as it may.

“On Thy compassion I repose,
In weakness and distress,
I will not ask for greater ease,
Lest I should love Thee less;
*Oh, 'tis a blessed thing for me
To need Thy tenderness.*

“When I am feeble as a child,
And flesh and heart give way,
Then on Thy everlasting strength
With clinging trust I stay ;
And the rough wind becomes a song.
The darkness shines like day.

“There is no death for me to fear,
For Christ, my Lord, hath died ;
There is no curse in this my pain,
For He was crucified ;
And it is fellowship with Him
That keeps me near His side.

“Safe in Thy sanctifying grace,
Almighty to restore ;
Borne onward—sin and death behind,
And love and light before ;
Oh let my soul abound in hope,
And praise Thee more and more !”

There was another little piece he liked me often to sing, partly because the tune was one we both enjoyed ; little Laura's child-voice would join in it, and it was very touching to hear its soft, sweet notes singing,—

“They are gathering homeward from every land,
One by one,
As their weary feet touch the shining strand,
One by one,
Their brows are wreathed with a fadeless crown,
Their travel-stained garments are all laid down,
And clothed in white raiment they rest on the
mead,
Where the Lamb loveth His chosen to feed,
One by one.

“Before they rest, they pass through the strife,
One by one;
Through the waters of death they enter life,
One by one;
To some, the floods of the river are still
As they ford on their way to the heavenly
hill,
To others, the waves run fierce and wild,—
Yet all reach the home of the undefiled,
One by one.

“We, too, shall come to the river-side,
One by one;
We are nearer its waters each eventide,
One by one;
We can hear the noise and dash of the stream
As we bend to listen 'mid life's deep dream;

Sometimes, the floods all the bank o'erflow,
Sometimes, in ripples the small waves go,
One by one."

But the one he was sure to ask for before I was through, was, "Just as I am,"—especially was this verse perpetually on his lips :

"Just as I am—Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come."

And when he was tired even of hymns, some passage of the Bible would bring the light into his eyes. One day near the last, he said—

"I want only the *pure word* now, Annie."

If ever there was a little angel of mercy in a sick-room, Laura was one; only six years old, one would not suppose she could have done much, but her delicate ear was the first to detect every wish, and her noiseless little feet the quickest to supply it. And she was so happy always; to sit on

the bed, if Graham was lying there, to pass her little soft hands over his forehead, to twine his curls round her fingers, to repeat little snatches of songs and hymns, of which she had a marvellous store, was a never-failing delight to her, and always soothing to the invalid; she seemed to have a sixth sense, by which she divined exactly what would please him; and while he slept she would keep watch, perched on the counterpane, with her finger lifted to her lips if any one entered, a perfect little image of devotion, so silent, so alert, so ready to spring at any signal. And when my heart was aching sorest, to press her to my bosom, to feel her arms round my neck and hear her soft, loving voice, was more comforting than I can tell. It is so sweet to be loved by a child when your heart is breaking!

Mary Sterling came to me, too, with her large, noble heart, and her wisdom and courage, and was an inestimable blessing to us both. I turned to and rested on her as a dear sister, and I know she was glad to

come ; so it was all heart-service in the sick-room ; even his physician was a personal friend, glad to come at all hours and minister to him in any and every way.

“ Yes, those fifteen months were full of blessings, and as the chiefest one we felt that Christ himself became more and more a living Presence, actual and dear. More and more heartily could I pray, “ *○ my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done.*” He alone knew how bitter it was, how I had shrunk back from tasting it, and He alone could enable me to drink it.

As I have said, those last communings with my beloved one were the most precious that had gone before, and I have no fear that those to come will not be still more rich and satisfactory ; for I believe the office of all pure, God-given love is not merely to bind human souls together in a blissful union, but to draw both upward to the eternal, all-satisfying Love. Almost one of the last of Graham’s utterances was, “ Thank

God, our love goes on forever ;"—the *very* last, "Not death, but life—LIFE."

I wonder what these eight years in heaven have brought him ; I wonder if he does not sometimes long to tell me—but I can wait ; I know that all is right—often he seems very near to me ; almost always I turn to him as if he were understanding my thought and sympathizing with it ; but I dare not dwell too much on this. I like best to dwell on what I know—that he is with Christ and like Christ, being expanded and developed in God's own way—the best way ; and that Christ is with me, helping my infirmities, and striving to bring out more and more of His glorious image in my heart. He wants me and Graham wants me to become holier, to be raised more and more out of my selfishness, to be more and more filled with love to God and love to all my fellow-beings, even the lowest and the vilest, and to be more and more willing to serve them, as I have opportunity ; and shall I repine, I who have been watched over and guarded

every step of the way, because all my foolish heart has craved is not given to it? No; it is love which withholds as well as gives, and I can bless God to-day for the sorrows, the sufferings, and the separations of life, as well as for its unions, its joys and friendships, dear and unspeakably precious to my soul as these have been. I believe all the love and friendship is still in existence, still guarding and blessing me, though in what precise way I cannot tell; nor do I care to; it is in the best way, and that is enough for me to know.

In all these years I have never felt alone; Christ has been faithful to His promise and has sent the Comforter; I know Christ loves me, that Graham loves me, that all that the tenderest love can do to bless me in the highest sense of blessedness is being done—and that contents me; yea more, fills my heart with gratitude to overflowing.

Not long before Graham left me, I came across a few lines in a newspaper, homely ones enough, but the sentiment pleased him,

and when I said, "That is what you would like me to do," he smiled and said, "Yes, dear." They have been often in my heart since, and I think have really helped me.

"Bury thy sorrow, the world hath its share,
Bury it deeply, hide it with care.

"Think of it calmly when curtained by night,
Tell it to Jesus, and all will be right.

"Gather the sunlight aglow on thy way,
Gather the moonbeams, each soft, silvery ray.

"Hearts grown weary with heavier woe
Droop into sadness—go, comfort them, go!

"Bury thy sorrows, let others be blest,
Give them the sunshine—tell Jesus the rest."

CHAPTER X.

THAT first year was almost a blank; I was physically exhausted and could only endure. I do not think I could have borne that year without Mary Sterling's inspiring presence and dear little Laura's caressing love. Oh what a blessing came under our roof with that poor, blind child! Her instincts were so true she never sang too loud or in any way jarred on my too sensitive nerves; yet she was like a sunbeam in the house, gliding about like a ray of light, or a breath of perfume, scattering joy and sweetness. Her natural organization is peculiar, and in that hour of sorrow she did for me what few children could; and it was no exaggeration to call her, as of old, "my singing birdie," "my little violet."

“my heart’s delight,” for everything that was sweet and comforting she was to me that year—the year I so needed to be comforted ; if I had ever done anything for her, she repaid it then a hundred-fold, and she has been a blessing ever since in a thousand ways. I often wonder if her mother knows into what a sweet flower she is unfolding. Graham once told me he believed that whatever could give our friends pleasure to know there, they certainly would know ; I like to think it is so, and that his spirit rejoices in her sweetness and goodness, as he surely would have done had he lived to see it.

At the close of that year I rallied ; both body and mind regained their old condition, and then before me rose the question,—“What am I to do with my life in all these years that probably lie between me and the end?”

Something better, it seemed to me, as I revolved it, might be made of it than to merely live on in luxurious ease in my large house, with Mary Sterling and little Laura

to minister to me; but what should it be? I well knew it was not in me to do any great thing—to go into hospitals, or on a mission, or anything else in the heroic line; Mary Sterling was far better adapted to such efforts—but I had good health, I was in the prime of life, and had means beyond what I cared to spend upon myself; surely I might do some little good to somebody!

But I said to myself, “I will not be in haste, I will wait and see if any work comes to me, keeping both eyes and heart watchful to sieze on any opportunity.” In the meantime there were a few poor in our little village to be relieved, and almost always some sick person I could watch with, or at least could carry broths and jellies to; and there were the benevolent enterprises carrying on by great hearts in the outside world, to which I could contribute.

But I craved something more personal; something to more fully occupy my empty hands; something even involving much labor and self-denial I felt I could accept,

may, welcome gladly, if it was work for the Master and might be done meekly for His sake.

The first work that came to me was Miss Patty Train. Poor soul, she had never had much of a home, and had lost that little; she had supported herself by sewing, but work failed; her eyes had grown dim; her limbs rheumatically, and her voice sounded more than ever like a tomb-stone. What could be done for Miss Patty? Get her a little place and see she was comfortably established in it? Yes, but she needed more; she needed in her fading-out, crippled old age, care and love; a heart to lean on and care for her.

Now, Miss Patty was not agreeable to me; she never had been, and now less than ever, for the joints of her mind had got knotty and twisted as well as those of her body, and was not likely to be a lovely, but a soured, complaining, disagreeable old age; yet somehow my heart warmed to her; she certainly was one of God's children, to be

looked after by somebody. I had a bright, sunny room up-stairs, over the sitting-room ; cosey and comfortable Miss Patty might be made there ! I was almost afraid to suggest it to Mary, fearing she would ridicule the idea—I rather thought it was ridiculous myself, but I wanted to do it, if it was.

Mary at first debated the subject a little, and I compromised by deciding to ask Miss Patty to make me a little visit. So I put on my bonnet and went over that very afternoon. I found her in her worst mood, and there was no use in trying to make anything right ; everybody had abused her, even the Almighty himself had dealt hardly by her.

“It’s easy enough,” she said, “for folks like you, who’ve never had any trouble, to talk about God’s bein’ good ; I s’pose if I lived in a big house and had everything I wanted, I should think he was marcfiful too ; but when a body’s been tormented all her life, and hain’t got no home, nor friends, nor health, nor money, and don’t know where she’s to put down the sole of her foot next,

it ain't so easy to talk about his goodness, I tell 'em; and I guess you d find 'twan't, if you was in my shoes."

"I want you should come over and stay awhile with me, Miss Patty," I said, "I have got a warm room, and think I can make you very comfortable."

She turned on me as if I had proposed robbing her.

"How am I to git away, I should like to know, and leave all my things for anybody to destroy or carry off who wanted to? That's just as much as some folks know."

Her things were but a miserable collection of old duds, but dear and precious to her for all that. I can't say I wanted them, but I made another effort.

"I've got a good attic," I said, "where they can be put away nicely, and as you say you have got to leave here, that may be as good a place as any for storing them."

"Who's goin' to see to movin' on 'em, I should like to know, and I a lyin' here all

cramped up with the rheumatiz?" she asked, angrily.

I put on my blindest smile and answered,

"Wouldn't you dare to trust me to pack them up, Miss Patty, and let Tcm come over with his wagon and bring them? I'll see he does it carefully."

"I don't see what you want to come here for, stirrin' up an old woman who's lyin' on her dyin' bed—why can't you let me be and die in peace?"

Now the fact was she was not likely to die for several years, and she could not stay there; the roof leaked on her bed, the chimney was tumbling down, and the cold winter coming on, while the owner of the wretched old tenement was determined to get rid of her; the choice was between the poor-house and my offer. I finally set this before her in a few plain, Saxon words; and, after deliberating a week or two, she condescended to come to me as the least evil, never concealing the fact that she considered it an evil. Poor soul! it was one to

ner; change of any kind is hard in old age, and with every nerve in her quivering with pain, how could she help feeling distressed at being "turned out of house and home," as she termed it?

I tried to make the change as easy for her as possible; at first I had the room arranged as tastefully as I could, making up the bed with one of my nicest Marseilles counterpanes; but on second thought I had it taken off and her own sheets and patch-work quilt put on instead, and her old bureau with the clock standing on it, her chest of drawers and two old-fashioned rocking-chairs, which Tom had brought over, set up to make the room look as much as possible like the old one; for I knew these familiar objects would be much pleasanter to her eye than any strange furniture, however handsome; but I left the reclining-chair in one corner, thinking she might find in time how much more restful it would be to her aching bones.

"Why, Auntie," said Laura, when she had seen all the arrangements—that is, felt of

them—getting as correct an idea, apparently, as I had of their exact appearance, “how could you do so?”

I tried to explain my reasons, but I saw she was only half convinced, and still a little troubled, so, by way of comforting her, I allowed her to bring in Chirp, her pet canary, and her most precious possession, to hang in the bay window. I considered this a doubtful experiment, but she was very anxious to do something for poor Miss Patty.

“And Chirp will sing so, it will make her glad,” she said.

One warm sunny October day Miss Patty, well wrapt up in comfortables, was brought over and carried to the nicely-warmed sunshiny-room; her possessions, even to each old broom and pan and skillet, having been removed before. If I had expected—which I did not—that Miss Patty would show any pleasure in her new surroundings, I should have been sorely disappointed, for nothing about them was right,

and in less than fifteen minutes after her arrival, as Chirp, inspired by all that was going on, poured forth his most exuberant song, she cried out,—

“Who did put that squallin’ critter here—do carry him off, or he’ll drive me ravin’ crazy!”

Laura’s face, as Chirp was taken down and ignominiously carried back to his old perch, was pitiful to see; great tears rolled down her cheeks, and for almost the first time in her life she was really angry.

“She don’t like Chirp—she won’t hear Chirpie sing,” she cried, as if it were beyond belief, “she’s a naughty, bad, ugly, old—”

I placed my hand on her mouth.

“She is a poor, sick old woman, full of trouble and pain,” I said, “one of God’s children, whom He has sent here for us to see if we can’t make her a little happier.”

“Did *He* send her?” she asked, her voice full of awe.

“I think so,” I answered, “the poor, the sick and the suffering are all His children;

and He permits us to minister to them, and says that what we do for them is done for Him."

"*Is it?*" she said, still in the same awed tone, "can we—can I do anything for *Him*?"

"Yes," I said, and as soon as I had leisure I opened her Gospels, which she has in raised letters, and placed her hand on a verse. She traced her fingers over them carefully, slowly repeating,—

"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

I then placed her finger on another passage.

"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

"Did Jesus Christ say these lines?" she asked.

"Yes, with His own blessed voice."

She said no more, but I knew the truth contained in these words had found a lodg-

ment in her busy brain. She was then eight years old, and very thoughtful for her age, seeing more things without eyes, I often thought, than most children with.

The next morning she said,—

“Auntie, I want to carry up Miss Patty’s coffee; may I? I won’t spill.”

So I gave her a little waiter with the coffee cup, sugar and cream on it, while I carried the large one with the rest of the breakfast.

It was always pretty to see Laura’s deft-handed little ways, and the first pleased word Miss Patty uttered was,—

“I declare, if ’tain’t a sight to behold that Beeby gal carryin’ things round so! I never did see the beat on’t.”

Laura’s face shone with delight, and, after I had heard Miss Patty’s long string of complaints, and by much effort got her into some new, warm flannels, and made her generally as comfortable as I could, she and I went down stairs together, and putting her hand in mine, she whispered softly,—

"Wasn't it the same as giving a cup of cold water, Auntie?"

"Yes, dear," I said, and kissed the eager, up-turned face.

It was good for Laura to trot up stairs and down, waiting on Miss Patty, even to bear with her peevishness, though she was less fretful toward her and more willing she should do for her than any one else.

But it was still better for me. Miss Patty was trying, very trying, at times; but while listening to her complainings, or bathing her swollen limbs, or trying to tempt her appetite by cooking up some little dainty, the pain seemed to go out of my heart, at the tips of my fingers, as it were; it was good for me to have her on my mind by day and to steal many times into her room each night, to see she was not exposed to cold, and bathe the limbs so full of pain; and if she showed no special gratitude, I knew the poor old soul was really more comfortable than she would have been anywhere else.

Afer a few weeks the swelling of the joints lessened, she could sleep at night, could sit up and even walk a few steps, leaning on my arm, and her nervous system was getting more composed. One day she even let me put on a new cap and flannel wrapper, and looked, as Laura said, after passing her fingers softly over them, "so nice!"

She did look nice, and when I sat down and read a little while to her, as I did every day, she burst out into a kind of sob.

"What a good-for-nothin', fault-fandin', ungrateful old crittur I am!" she said, "and how good you be to me, Miss Kingston!"

But in the same breath she added,—

"Laury, do turn up these cuffs; they're a sight too long; it's strange folks never can get anything right."

Had my object been recognition and gratitude, I should have been sorely disappointed; but I worked from another motive and had my reward—had it in seeing the peacefulness that gradually stole over her weary face, in the lessening of her pain, in the new

self-control and patience that gradually sprang up within her, and in knowing I had done something to make one sad, lonely, desolate heart a little less sad and lonely. Often while ministering to her I seemed to feel Graham's presence all about me; I knew that if indeed he had any cognizance of me and my surroundings, he would be glad to see Miss Patty there; and sweeter and dearer than all, close at my heart, lay the inspiring words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, *ye have done it unto me.*" Perhaps I did a foolish thing in taking her, I could not tell; I knew other people thought so; but I know it brought a blessing to my heart, stilling many a weary longing there.

I never forgot in those days, when it was most necessary to remember it, Graham's desire that I should not go mourning and melancholy through life. "I think it will sadden me even in heaven, if you do," he had said. And I found so much that was good still left in the world, so much to be

enjoyed, why should I go tearful and sad all my days?

There were the beautiful seasons coming and going, each with its own peculiar charm and glory; there were the starry heavens above and the lovely earth beneath; and if those I loved best were absent from my sight, there were some warmly-beating human hearts still round me that I could reach and comfort.

I enjoyed my flowers, my rambles into the fragrant woods, the visits of friends, the reading of new books, and still more of the old ones, embalmed by many precious memories. I enjoyed our church, our prayer-meetings, our social reunions, the bright groups of youthful faces that gathered round me, pouring out their little histories of joy and sorrow into my ear—everything that was beautiful and good in God's fair world was still mine to enjoy more fully even than before, though so very, very differently. I could not shroud myself in crape, nor look at the world through the dense blackness of

a widow's veil. I wanted to gather in the sunlight, to be permeated by its warmth and light, that so, if possible, I might reflect its rays on others, instead of chilling them.

I heard that Mrs. Stone, who at first often came to condole with me, expressed great astonishment that a woman who had lost *such* a husband should feel it so little. But I had not lost him; he was still living, still mine. I had not laid my best beloved in the dark grave, only the dust that had shrouded him—very dear and precious dust it was; and most tenderly did I nurture the fair white lilies that I had planted on his grave—his favorite flower; but *he* was not there—oh no, no, no!

And had I felt it little? God only knew—perhaps in the sense she meant, I had. I had not cherished grief, nor thought it dishonor to his memory to be as happy and cheerful as I could. How little one person knows how the heart-strings of another vibrate and how very careful, therefore, we

should be in forming estimates of their hidden life !

With Miss Patty, Mary Sterling and little Laura in my house and heart, there yet was room ; and how should it be filled ? Either with old women or little children, I used to tell Mary Sterling, because all my capacities lay in these two lines ; and I thought, perhaps, one or the other would come to me, if I kept watch a little longer.

In the third year of my loneliness I took a journey. Miss Patty, who had been with me almost a year, was a great deal better, really suffering but little, and able to walk about in the garden on sunny days. I had an excellent girl in the kitchen ; Mary Sterling was there to keep everything straight ; so I accepted an invitation from a dear friend I had not seen for years to visit her in New York. Laura would go with me, partly because I never could bear to have her long away, and partly that I wished to

take her to the Institution for the Blind, in order to gain information about the best way of educating her.

The country was glowing with June loveliness; and I enjoyed every moment of my journey, and also enjoyed the visit to Mrs. James, herself a widow. Having been left with a large fortune, she had identified herself with several of the charitable movements of the city, and the three weeks I spent with her opened a new world to me—a world of which I had never dreamed—a world filled with crime and poverty, and the fearful suffering growing out of them. I often went with her on her visits to some of the vilest portions of the city, and one day we came on a family that specially interested me. I cannot describe the filth and degradation that surrounded them, of which the bare sight sickened me. They were an English family; the father had died on the voyage over; and the mother, still looking like a young woman, lay dying on a heap of filthy rags. So far as we could judge, from the

stories we heard, she had been intemperate, and perhaps a bad woman in other ways; but, good or bad, she was going out of the world to leave four little children orphans and shelterless. Two of them were twin girls, about three years old, the eldest, a boy of five or six, and a baby a few months old, also a boy. The twins were uncommonly nice-looking children, or would be when their faces were washed and heads combed, but the boy had a bold, bad face. As we went home, Mrs. James was planning how to get these children, or at least some of them, into asylums provided for such outcasts.

"The trouble is," she said, "they are all overrun with applications; and even those who get in have really no home-life; they can't have in such large establishments."

"But it is vastly better than leaving them where they are," I said, "no child could live there long."

"So you would think, but they do; hundreds grow up in just such places, nobody

knows how ; sleeping in cellars or crawling for shelter under door-steps or into empty hogsheads, anywhere for a slight shelter Who can wonder they soon spend every penny that is given them at a gin-shop, and that long before they are grown up they are thieves and drunkards, or something worse? Yes, they are better off in an asylum, of course ; but, Annie, you don't know how disheartening it is to try to stem the tide of vice and misery that flows over such a city as this! The little that is done only shows how much is left undone—how much lies beyond the reach of any human help. What are the few drops of relief in this great ocean of sin and suffering? And the suffering all comes from sin ; if men and women were only industrious and temperate, there would be no such horrors as we have seen to-day."

"But a great deal is being done," I said, "and each one who does all he can stands clear in the sight of God."

"Yes, but who does all he can—who

knows how much he ought to do? Often, when I come home from such vile places, I look round on my luxurious rooms, or what seem such by comparison, with utter disgust; my curtains and carpets, my silks and embroideries, all seem abominable extravagances."

"Yet you live and dress quite simply for the city," I said.

"I know I do; but sometimes I feel that I ought to wear nothing but sackcloth, and turn into a Sister of Charity and live among the poor. Oh, it is so hard to know how much one ought to do!"

It was hard; of course I repeated the usual platitudes in relation to one's having a right to gratify his tastes, and that expenditures gave employment to the poor, which was better than charity, and so on; truths, perhaps—only there are sharp moments in our life when some things stare us in the face and shake us out of our old, ordinary notions, or at least into wondering whether they are true or false ones; moments when

certain words of Christ's crowd on our memory, burdened with a meaning beyond what the church or the world has yet discovered. I suppose we all have such moments; and then we sink back into the old routine of making ourselves perfectly comfortable, and giving what little beyond that we can spare for the poor; and oh! it takes so much to make ourselves thoroughly comfortable, that too often there is a small enough moiety left!

After I went to my room that night, I lifted my curtain and stood long at my window, gazing out over the masses of chimney-tops and roofs of that great city, where thousands on thousands of human beings were congregated, some lying on beds of luxury, some sunk in poverty, and O God! so many, many steeped in crime—yet all God's children, all watched over by His all-seeing eye! I could not take it in; the burden was greater than I could bear. I wept—I stretched out my arms as if I would fain embrace them all in a grasp of love—

but I was powerless. I could only leave them in the arms of everlasting Love. Oh, what a comfort it was that night to know that He was Love!

I could not sleep, thoughts so crowded on my brain. I was but an infinitesimal portion of this great family, but I was a part; I had my place in it and my work. I was to do all I could to help the others, no matter how infinitely small that all might be—and outside of these festering alleys, where never a breath of pure air could come, there lay a great world of air and sunlight, of green trees and flowers. If I could take out from those alleys, from all the vileness of its surroundings, one human being created in God's image and give it His pure air and sunshine—give it wholesome food, clean clothing, and the sweet genial atmosphere of a Christian home, it surely would be doing something; it might be rescuing one soul from sin to a whole eternity of purity and blessedness. Why should I not do it—I whose arms God had made so empty, and

whose heart He had filled with such strong yearnings for work and usefulness? Why should I not do more—why should I not take all those four English orphans out of the slime and filth, and give them food and clothing, shelter and education? I, who had a great house and no chick nor child, nor blood relation, so far as I knew, who needed help, what was to hinder me from filling it with these forsaken outcasts? My eyes filled with tears of gladness at the thought, and as I earnestly prayed to be guided to a right course in relation to them, there came to me a sweet consciousness of Graham's presence—warm, bright, joy-giving, soul-inspiring—what, I wondered, would he advise me to do? His wishes and Christ's would now be in perfect unison; whatever one thought of it, the other thought, and my soul thrilled with a joyful sense that both were near me.

But was it not a romantic project which a little day-light, practical common-sense would shiver into atoms? I did not want

to act impulsively or foolishly—I would reflect and take advice.

When the daylight came, two opposite sides of the question presented themselves to my mind forcibly; two voices spoke loudly and earnestly.

First voice—"Taking four children is very well to dream of; it would sound well in a story-book, but real life is not a dream or romance, and to take four children into your family would bring more labor, care and vexation of spirit than you have the slightest idea of—more than you could bear or ought to bear."

Second voice—"But many a woman has trained eight or ten children and has not broken down, but lived to a good old age."

First voice—"They were her own children—the children God gave her; and with them, coming one by one, He gave strength to bear the burden. No one has a call to take other people's children; they have not in that case parental love, nor the strength parental love gives; it is a different thing

entirely. You could not train them properly; you are a lone and not over wise woman, and boys need a man's oversight; you would probably ruin them if you undertook."

Second voice—"You might train them poorly enough, it is true, but who will do any better by them? If there was a probability of their having a decent home anywhere else, it would be different, but you could surely give them a better education than they will get in that wretched New York alley. Anything in the country is better; and God gives strength to those who need it."

First voice—"He gives strength to such as are in the way of their duty, but not to those who impulsively rush out of their place and assume responsibilities they are not called to. And what will people say? How absurd it will look for you to come home with your dirty children—all Ashwood will think you are either crazy or a fool!"

Second voice—"Ashwood people may say what they please; you serve a different Master; if He approves, let the whole world consider you foolish; what is that to you?"

But I did care. I did not like to do what seemed ridiculous, especially now I had no husband to shield me; though I resolved I would not let that prevent me from doing what I knew to be right. If they had all been girls it would have been much easier to decide, but I stood in mortal fear of boys, never having been thrown much with them, and having nothing in my own experience to help me understand a boy's nature; very likely I should ruin one by improper indulgence, or improper restraint, or both; and these boys would inherit evil traits, no doubt, and be particularly hard to manage. I was sorely puzzled. But they would have air and sunlight, and green grass and home-influences, and these would alone be worth something.

I consulted Mary Sterling, for I did not wish to make her home uncomfortable, and

I relied very much on her judgment; for if I had a foolish, romantic streak in me, she was practical common-sense itself; and, in the meantime, I advised with Mrs. James, who was a sensible woman. She thought I might safely take the children and keep them for the present; and when the boys got beyond my control, if they ever did, find them a good place in the country under some man I knew. Their chances for growing up decent men and women must, she said, be vastly greater than if left in a city, and she was sure God would strengthen me for the work. I had no idea of adopting them—Laura I should always consider mine—but my idea was to so educate them as to fit them to support themselves when grown, giving them to understand that from the first.

Mary Sterling's answer was a great relief; she believed I was doing both a wise and kind thing to take them; and that my life would be greatly enriched by these new interests; and that, so far as she was concerned,

she should be truly glad to help me in any way she could; she, too, wanted work, and did not shrink, or believe I need to, from the care and labor involved.

She closed her letter by saying:

"I must tell you that Miss Patty is greatly shocked at the idea of having your house made into what she calls 'a foundin' hospital,' and even goes so far as to threaten to leave it if they come! I tried to mollify her by representing what an opening it would make for her services as a seamstress—she had just been complaining that she wanted work and could not get any—but she turned up her nose indignantly at the idea of 'sew-in' for them brats.'"

I had considered Miss Patty before, knowing pretty well how it would strike her, but I hoped to make such arrangements when I got home that she should still prefer my home to the poor-house. But I own to great sinking of spirits as I looked forward to the life of petty annoyances and wearing cares I was taking up. But had I not longed

for something beside ease, and should I complain that I was not going to have an easy life?

No; having convinced myself I was doing good work, I would go forward bravely and cheerily, placing myself and the children trustfully in God's hands and relying on His strength.

I had bought some ready-made garments for the children; and, arrayed in them, they were brought over to Mrs. James's the night before I left the city. The mother had died before this, and we had seen her decently buried, and had collected what scanty information we could about the former life of the parents, for the children's sake, though we learned little I should ever wish to tell them.

CHAPTER XI.

YES, the four children all came after this wise. Mark Barry, the eldest, had bold, black eyes; a thick mass of black hair, given to standing up all over his head; a very dark, sallow complexion, large mouth, large ears, large hands, and large body every way, with a defiant, let-me-alone kind of air; he said he was seven the May before, and looked older than that. The twins were two blue-eyed, light-haired, fair-complexioned children, three years old, but small for that age, and looking so exactly alike I could only tell them apart by Fanny's darker hair; Lucy was a trifle shorter, too; but both had plump, round, regular English faces, while Mark

looked as if he might be the child of a Spanish pirate.

The baby, whom I had scarcely noticed before, was a beautiful child, apparently about six months old, with soft, dark eyes and the loveliest expression, who, as soon as I took him, stretched out his little hands to me and began to talk baby-talk and crow in the most cunning and winning way. Laura was enchanted by the baby, whom she at once busied herself about, but she kept very shy of the others, while her blindness seemed to frighten them, especially the twins.

I had engaged an English Protestant woman as nursery-girl and chamber-maid; my enlarged family requiring additional service, and she came with the children to go on with us. So I started off in the clear brightness of a June morning with my retinue of five. Surely I should not soon have to complain again of empty hands!

That was five years ago, and to-day my family stands as follows: myself, a woman forty-one years of age, with here and there

a gray hair showing itself, but healthy and vigorous, and too full of care to have many sad or lonely hours, often anxious, sometimes gravely troubled, but generally calm and peaceful, trusting that I am doing the work my Master would have me do—doing it imperfectly and with many, many errors and mistakes, as I only too well know—but still, with an underlying purpose to do it in the fear and love of God, and with the cheering hope that His smile and blessing are resting upon me, day by day, as I travel on.

Miss Patty, who on the whole concluded to remain, is sitting in her pleasant room where the morning sun is shining on her and where, one by one, new and nicer articles of furniture have replaced the old and worn-out ones. She is still a little inclined to fret and think her lot in life is hard; but in reality she is now quite free from pain, and able to do a good deal with the needle, especially in the way of mending; by her side stands a heaped-up basket of little

stockings, in which the eight busy, restless, kicking, climbing, dancing feet have made sad holes, but into which, with patient fingers, she will set stitch after stitch till they are whole again, relieving her mind by occasionally asserting,—

“There never was such a tearin’ set o’ children as I’ve got on my hands in my old age! When I was young, bare feet was good enough for anybody, but now beggar’s children must go shod. I don’t know what Miss Kingston is thinking on for my part—’twill take a sight o’ money to bring up these children the way she’s goin’ on, I can tell her; white petticoats and pantalettes, a snarl of ’em in the wash every week—mabbe they do wear and wash better than colored ones, but there’s a heap o’ work in it, I know that; and all to be mended and made! I guess old Patty Train won’t rust out yet awhile!”

“And she doesn’t want to,” I say, laying a hand gently on her arm; “she’s glad to be a help t’ me and to be useful in the world.”

"Wall, if I be, I don't know as you need to be a twittin' on me about it," she says, but says it with a smile about her lips and chin; and when Laura, our dear, sweet, lovely Laura comes gliding in and says,—

"You must come down, Miss Patty, and help us tie the wreaths for the birthday party," she suffers herself to be carried away captive; indeed, Laura can always do what she pleases with Miss Patty, leading her by the silken cord of love; for her old heart opened years ago to take the little blind girl in, and it has been the gentler and the warmer for it ever since.

Laura is the next figure in our family group; Mary Sterling would have been, but three years ago she was spirited off West by a grave sensible man, several years her senior, to be mother-in-law to two small children. It was an irreparable loss to me, but she seems very happy, having one little boy of her own, whom she has named Graham Kingston. She sent me his photograph the other day, and says, "If he should ever in

the least resemble him whose name he bears, my fondest hope will be realized."

Laura is now fourteen years old ; small of her age, and, with an exceeding grace of form and movement, she is, if not beautiful, a wonderfully lovely and attractive girl ; still, as when she first came to us, our singing birdie, our sweet violet, our hearts' delight. She was just the child to pet, and seemed not to spoil by petting ; still I have no doubt it was good for her to live with other children and not to be the sole object of care and thought. She was passionately fond of Baby Walter—so we named the nameless child that came to us—and lavished on him all the wealth of her loving nature, and his death was a bitter grief to her ; for in spite of all the love and tending we could give the little stranger—certainly the loveliest baby I ever saw—he drooped and pined away, closing his eyes and going to sleep in my arms just three months after I brought him home. We laid him to rest beside our darling Bessie ; a sweet spot, to which the

children love to go, always carrying flowers to scatter over the two little graves. Strangely did my heart cling to that little nursling, and when he left me I shed many tears. But it was pleasant to think of him, as being welcomed in heaven by my dear husband and child, who I was sure would love him for my sake.

“As a twig trembles which a bird
Lights on to sing, its leaves unbent,
So was my memory thrilled and stirred—
I only know he came and went.”

The going out of a baby-life is a small thing outside of its home, but it was deeply felt by every member of our little household, and left softening memories in all our hearts.

Laura is, of course, more dependent in certain ways than other children, but I hardly know how a child could have been a sweeter companion or comforter than she has been from the moment she first nestled herself to sleep on my bosom; and hundreds

and hundreds of times have I thanked God for putting it into my heart to bring her into my home. I hope to keep her always with me, if her life is spared; she will be less likely to marry than if she had sight, and I do not think she will be miserable with me, her heart is so good and loving. She is having every advantage in the way of a musical education I can give her, for her exquisite ear and voice seemed to demand it, and her proficiency delights all her masters. It will enable her to support herself by teaching music, should it ever become necessary, which I trust it never will. But I should not feel that I had done my whole duty if any one of the children was left unprepared to gain his or her own livelihood, if it ever should be desirable to, in the changes that may come.

Mark Barry, twelve years old last month, is to-day as curious a compound of good, bad, and extraordinary traits, oddly jumbled together, as can well be imagined. Capable, restless, quick-tempered, impatient of

control, yet warm-hearted and anxious to please ; caring little for study, yet making rapid progress whenever a sudden fit of application takes him ; doing something he ought not to every hour of his life, yet repenting violently ; he has caused me more anxiety than all the other children put together—yes, ten times over. Yet wilful, wayward, perplexing, wearing as he is, I have never regretted taking him ; if ever a boy needed the restraining, softening influences of a home, he did, and I have as yet a strong hold on him through his affections. If I find he is outgrowing me, Mr. Dean, Mary Sterling's husband, has promised to take him out West with him and give him a good business education, and no better guardian or home could have been found. It would be a sore wrench to part with him ; for the generous, impulsive, reckless boy is very dear to me, and I have great confidence that the good in him will eventually get the upper hand, and he make an energetic, useful man ; if he can only acquire

self-control, he would be sure to; but he sadly lacks that now; perhaps I expect too much of him, and make less allowance than a man would for the impetuosity of a boy's nature.

Lucy and Fanny, now eight years old, are two as rosy, stout, healthy-looking children as one often sees, neither of them at all pretty, but quiet, nice-looking girls; neither of them are remarkable in any way, but both of them are very dear to me; and to watch their unfolding in these five years, has been a constant source of interest and pleasure. I shall never let them go from me unless to homes of their own, for they have grown into my heart almost as if they were my own children.

To-day is their birthday, at least the day we observe as such; for, no one knowing the precise day of their birth, we have fixed on the one they first came to me as the most appropriate, and I call them my June children. Laura's comes in October, on the same day as my darling Bessie's.

They are having a grand frolic downstairs with a dozen or so of their play-mates ; each of their two fair, young heads being crowned with a wreath of roses, and each wearing a white muslin dress, as Bessie wore so long ago. I like to think that her spirit may be hovering near, rejoicing in all the joy that comes to me. As usual, Fanny is the merriest, Mark the noisiest, and Lucy the quietest of the party. I am to go down and cut the pretty birthday cake for them ; and am glad to feel that Auntie, as they all call me, does not cast a shadow on their gayest mood, and that the day would not for them be quite complete without her presence and sympathy for a little while.

Yes, they are all dear children, and often when I look on their healthy faces and sturdy figures, I think how different it might have been had they stayed in the alley where I found them. Whatever mistakes I may have made in their training, they certainly are better off with me than they would have been there.

I have been down and joined the little folks at the refreshment table; it was a pretty gathering, lively and merry without being rude; my only fear was that some of them would kill themselves by over-eating; but my experience with children is accustoming me to marvellous performances in that line; so I hope none of them will suffer. It was pleasant to watch their bright faces and their enjoyment of the meal; and when, after a great deal of winking and nodding, and looking wise, and going out and coming in, Mark appeared, attired as an Apollo, I believe, certainly as somebody, with a vast amount of green wreaths hanging round him, and a great deal of silver tissue paper, in the form of stars and suns, glittering on his breast, who, mounted on a rostrum, alias a shawl-covered box, recited five stanzas of original poetry, composed for the occasion, in a sonorous voice, with many striking and remarkable gesticulations, the joy and glory of the day was at its height; the acclamations and applause unbounded

I well knew who was our poet laureate ; no one but Laura was equal to such a feat as that. It was very prettily done, and the lines very good for a child ; if they had some halting measures and overstrained expressions, there was genuine feeling in them, and I was especially touched by an allusion to her mother and to Graham, as,—

“Guardian angels fondly watching o’er us.”

And I pressed the blushing girl to my heart, feeling really grateful for her little effort, at the same time warmly congratulating the orator of the day on his eminent success. Nothing could exceed Miss Patty’s wonder and delight, and her repeated exclamations of, “I never did see the beat o’ that,” added to the universal joy.

The day, however, did not wind up without an accident—it would have been a marvel if it had—for Mark, having conceived the grand project of letting off a few fireworks, of course achieved an explosion, and half frightened me out of my senses by

rushing in with half his hair singed off, and his hands and face blackened, and somewhat scorched. Binding up his face in cream, and getting him to bed, has been for me the closing performance of the day. But the poor boy was very patient and caressing, and as he really meant no harm, I could not blame him ; I was only too thankful no more serious harm was done. But a boy *is* an anxiety !

It is all still in the house now ; I have gone my nightly round, looking into every room, beginning with Miss Patty and ending with the twins. All are buried in quiet slumber, and I, too, am peaceful ; a little weary, but very grateful for all the goodness which surrounds me.

The children have had a happy day, and so have I ; and if there have been mingling in our joy companions they could not see—invisible spirits hovering over us in love and blessing—they have only added to, not lessened, my delight.

How rich I am to-night in my heart treas-

ures, those below and those above ! How full is life of healthful interests and occupation, and how rarely do I ever feel lonely now ! Why should I, when all around are those I love ; while above bend the bright heavens—filled, too, with friendly faces, and nearer than all, more loving than all, is He to whom I owe every joy and hope, the source of all blessedness in earth and in heaven—Jesus the Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end ?

And why should I be disheartened when, amid all life's cares and labors, anxieties and sorrows, I hear a voice evermore saying, "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*" ?

THE END.



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